

THE AMERICAN FAMILIAR ESSAY, 1815-1835

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ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis: The American Familiar Essay, 1815-1835.

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This thesis seeks to provide further material for a comprehensive treatment of the genre of the American essay by intensive study of the American familiar essay, with particular attention to the essay in American periodicals, during a critical time in its development, the period 1815-1835. Towards that end, it gathers representative selections for each year of the era from the four major sources for the essay: magazines, especially general and literary ones; newspapers; annuals, and, beginning in the middle of the era, gift books; and separately published volumes by single authors or groups of authors. These essays, together with some from other, minor, sources, are organized into groups demonstrating literary influences, currents of emphasis, and authors' treatments, with the overall organization roughly chronological.

At the beginning of the era, American familiar essayists, led by a fervid nationalism into an acute social awareness, turned for subject matter to an examination of the customs and manners of their society. For literary models they retained the reliable Spectator, which had

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begun its reign over the American essay in the time of Franklin's youth, had prospered throughout the eighteenth century as American periodicals were established in Eastern Seaboard cities, and had most recently demonstrated its undiminished influence in the mature work of Joseph Dennie and the first published writings of Washington Irving. The Spectator's subjects, literary devices, and point of view perfectly suited the new generation of magazinists, who held the puritan view that literature should instruct as well as amuse.

The appearance of the Sketch Book in 1819-1820, however, sounded the knell of the Addisonian essay in America, for although hundreds of anonymous "Spectators" continued throughout the era to edify as well as to entertain, a new group of essayists accepted Irving's invitation to don the "holiday attire" of a more personal kind of essay. Readers responded as warmly, and the immediate cisatlantic success of the Sketch Book moved American editors, notably George Morris of the New-York Mirror, to adopt Irving as the dean of American letters and his essays as the touchstone of literary quality.

But some complained that the Sketch Book had more to say about things English than about things American, and that its author was spending his time abroad instead of at home where he belonged. Welcome, then, to the nationalists, was a new coterie of nature essayists who could focus their

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attention on American natural beauty.

Welcome, too, in the closing years of the era, was a new voice from England. Introduced to American essayists and readers by a disgruntled editor of the New York Minerva, Elia was as enthusiastically adopted by the New-England Magazine and, paradoxically, by the Knickerbocker, as Irving had been by the New-York Mirror and the American Athenaeum, so that by 1835, Lamb's own essays and others that reflected his influence were being regularly printed in many an American magazine.

For the familiar essay, the era was an important one. It secured the position of the American periodical press, which in turn fostered the growth not only of the essay but also of poetry and the short story. It witnessed significant development in the essay as the genre gradually shook off the hampering Spectator tradition of objective social criticism and moved toward the subjective, familiar form of good talk put to paper. And it produced America's premier essayist, who was at the same time the first internationally famous American man of letters.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: THE ESSAY

Since the appearance of Michel de Montaigne's first two books of Essais in 1580, the term "essay" has continued to present the makers of definitions with a knotty problem, not only because the term has been used to describe writings as dissimilar as Montaigne's "Cannibals," Bacon's "Of Studies," Locke's Essay on the Human Understanding, Pope's versified Essay on Man, and Lamb's "Old China," but also because it has served as an unfortunate catchall for "any piece of writing which does not easily come within any of the better defined categories."¹ Even when the term has been narrowed to "formal essay" or "familiar essay," the question of definition although eased is not answered; for within the limits of the smaller area of the familiar essay, for example, have been listed such works as Cotton Mather's Essays To Do Good, A. B. Longstreet's Georgia Scenes (also often referred to as fiction), and Oliver Wendell Holmes's "Autocrat" papers--writings whose tone, style, purpose, and structure exhibit differences as perceivable as those between Sinclair Lewis's "Minnesota" and Edgar Allan Poe's "The

¹ Jacob Zeitlin, ed., Seventeenth Century Essays (New York, 1926), "Introduction," p. v.

Philosophy of Composition," both formal essays.

Since the hallmark of the essay is its variety--its resistance, in other words, to easy categorization--the question of whether it is possible succinctly to define the form comes at once to mind. After wrestling with the problem Samuel Johnson called the essay "a loose sally of the mind, an irregular, indigested piece, not a regular and orderly performance." To William Hazlitt, in one of his more cantankerous moods, essays were "abortions . . . ill-pieced transitions." To a long-winded later nineteenth century commentator in Macmillan's Magazine they were "l'art de s'égarer avec méthode," and to the only writer who has thus far attempted a full-length history of the American essay they were "the suggestive expression of a contemplative personality, in a prose composition of adequate length to present whatever aspect of a subject the author has in mind."²

One general idea emerges from these disparate "definitions": the familiar essay is ubiquitous and is therefore if not undefinable at least so stubbornly various as to require an extremely broad and elastic delimitation. Perceiving this, and being dissatisfied with hazy boundaries, other students of the essay have attempted more precise definition through more or less extensive segmentation of the form into sub-types. R. D. O'Leary, for example, after

² Macmillan's Magazine, XI (February 1865), 322. Adaline M. Conway, The Essay in American Literature (New York, 1914), p. 83.

complaining about the "boundlessness of the field," proceeded to enumerate and describe twenty-five different types ranging from the essay which deals with "the arts of living" to the one which "psychologizes, so to speak," and ended his disquisition by asserting that these twenty-five are "a few of the most important varieties."³ Benjamin Heydrick saw only six types--the personal essay, the descriptive essay, the character sketch, the critical essay, the editorial essay, and the reflective essay--although within these six types he included a selection of illustrative examples quite similar to the group used by O'Leary.⁴ William Tanner reduced the number to five--personal experiences, confessions and self-analyses; reflections and comments on life, human nature, customs, and experience; observations and discoveries in the familiar and commonplace; nature essays; and general observations, comments, and opinions of the author--but, as is evident, five to Mr. Tanner means five groups, totaling thirteen by Mr. O'Leary's method of counting.⁵ The trend toward fewer groups was reversed by Sister M. Eleanore, who saw eight (actually nine) groups: the aphoristic essay, the character essay, the classic essay, the letter essay, the short-story essay, the biographical and critical essay, the essay of the naturalists, and the familiar essay.⁶ And

³ The Essay (New York, 1928), pp. 207-225.

⁴ Types of the Essay (New York, 1921), pp. v-xiii.

⁵ Essays and Essay-Writing (Boston, 1917), pp. v-viii.

⁶ The Literary Essay in English (Boston, 1923), p. ix.

other students of the essay and compilers of numerous essay collections have used as few as two and as many as a dozen divisions.

No perceivable point of consistency may be derived from all these estimates, unless it be the shadowy distinction between the formal and the familiar essay. Clearly, the basis for division of essays into groups was in each case convenience of study despite attempts to categorize on other grounds. It is clear, too, that neither of these approaches to the problem--the extreme of near-vacuity and the mean of almost mathematical precision--can provide for the essay (or for any other genre of belles-lettres, for that matter) a workable yet circumscriptive definition. Indeed, as A. C. Benson has asserted, the attempt to classify precisely any of the forms of literary expression is only "confusing and bewildering"; to say that literature must conform to established types is "merest pedantry."⁷ Yet it must be possible to find an area of agreement which, although no panacea, will provide at least a point of departure.

Several thoughtful studies, especially of Montaigne's Essais, Addison's and Steele's Spectator and Tatler, and Charles Lamb's Essays of Elia, have supplied descriptions of the familiar essay which generally succeed in excluding from examination those writings obviously not in the field and in retaining those which are. Of these statements

⁷ "The Art of the Essayist," in Warner Taylor, ed., Types and Times in the Essay (New York, 1932), p. 7.

perhaps the most clearly phrased and succinct one is that composed by William F. Bryan and Ronald S. Crane for their study of the English familiar essay. The form is characterized, they wrote, by a "personal, confidential attitude of the writers toward their subjects and their readers, by an informal, familiar style, and by a concern with everyday manners and morals or with individual emotions and experiences rather than with public affairs or the material of systematic thinking."⁸ A year after the publication of this study, Professor Percy Van Dyke Shelly, in a notably lucid examination of the familiar essay for the lay reader, affirmed the Bryan-Crane statement and added in more specific terms what Bryan and Crane had implied: that an essential quality of the familiar essay is its subjectivity.⁹

Further refinement of this composite description of the familiar essay was undertaken by Professor Shelly's student, Marie H. Law, in her The English Familiar Essay in the Early Nineteenth Century (Philadelphia, 1934). Though the Bryan-Crane and Shelly studies had distinguished between the "personal" essay of Montaigne and the "periodical" essay of Addison and Steele--a clearly necessary delineation pointed out in American literature by W. H. Prescott as early as 1822--¹⁰

⁸ The English Familiar Essay (Boston, 1916), "Preface," p. iii.

⁹ "The Familiar Essay," University of Pennsylvania Public Lectures (Philadelphia, 1917), p. 247.

¹⁰ "Essay Writing," North American Review, XIV (April 1822), 319-350.

they were, for Mrs. Law's purpose, less effective in providing for the new direction taken by the familiar essay in the hands of Lamb, Hazlitt, and Hunt. Mrs. Law, therefore, first re-examined these earlier studies and affirmed the accuracy of the "two major sources" thesis, but then turned her attention to the subjective, literate, and therefore in the best sense "familiar" essays written by the authors of "Dream Children," "On Going a Journey," and "Getting Up on Cold Mornings."

Numerous essay collections, anthologies, and studies of portions of the genre of the essay published in the last quarter-century have demonstrated at least implicit agreement with the composite description of the form contributed to by Professors Bryan, Crane, Shelly, and Law. Russel Nye's crisply written introduction to his Modern Essays (1953) leans perceptibly on it, as does Homer Combs's brief introduction to A Book of the Essay (1950). The most recent scholarly consideration of a portion of the field, Melvin R. Watson's Magazine Serials and the Essay Tradition (1956), in its study of the Tatler and this periodical's successors reaffirms that part of the description germane to the "morals and manners" essay, as Donald Frame's now standard edition of Montaigne does for the part relative to the "personal" essay.

The general problems posed by an investigation of the American familiar essay in the period 1815-1835 are not unlike those faced by scholars in studies of other phases or areas

of the field. Having established a workable definition of the literary form to be studied, and having surveyed the available writings of the period as indicated by this standard, the scholar must ponder the question of how to deal with the data he has gathered. For the English Romantic period the obvious solution was by author, with works by Lamb, Hunt, Hazlitt, and DeQuincey falling into profitable and convenient separate chapters. Yet for this era in American literary history there is no such dazzling array of essay artists; only Washington Irving and, as a group, the Knickerbocker essayists deserve separate chapter treatment; for no other essayist, despite some first-rate pieces by such men as William Cullen Bryant, John James Audubon, and William Gilmore Simms, produced a body of essays which was both consistent enough in quality and extensive enough in amount to warrant such individual attention. And of course, none but Irving among American familiar essayists of the era attracted enough admirers and followers to form a "circle." Two other methods of organization suggested themselves: consideration by subject matter, following, for example, the model set by Philip Hicks in dealing with the American natural history essay;¹¹ and consideration by type, similar to that used by Guy Cardwell in his study of the Addisonian essay in South Carolina periodicals.¹² The first

¹¹ The Development of the Natural History Essay in American Literature (Philadelphia, 1924).

¹² "The Influence of Addison on Charleston Periodicals, 1795-1860," SP, XXXV (July 1938), 456-470.

of these methods immediately disqualified itself for this study because of the sheer number of subject matter groups involved and the obvious difficulty of making a coherent single study of what would best be dealt with in separate, shorter treatments.

Consideration by type, on the other hand, despite earlier abortive attempts to segment the essay into varied numbers of groups, seemed almost to impose itself on this study since the bulk of the material brought to light appears to fall naturally into categories similar to the divisions proposed by Dr. Law for the English Romantic period, but with alterations dictated by the American material and the writers who produced it.

By far the greatest number of essays that appeared in American periodicals between 1815 and 1835 were those which dealt with some aspect of social criticism, especially manners and morals, with the Spectator and Tatler as often referred to prototypes. A second group consisted of essays on the subject of external nature. Though still centrally concerned with ways toward the good life for the common man and with the general subject of social criticism, these essays exhibit two clear differences from the moral essays of the first group: a softening of the admonitory tone as a more personal and intimate and less objectively critical approach is used by essayists; reflection of the influence of the English Romantic movement, especially of Wordsworth, in their attention to natural beauty, to the immanence of

God in nature, to the relation of man to nature and to God, and to the interests of the common man.

The work of Washington Irving and of the Knickerbocker essayists--James Kirke Paulding, Nathaniel Parker Willis, Theodore Sedgwick Fay, William Cox, and others less well known today--provides the material for the third group. Irving as the outstanding essayist of the era is considered not only as an essay artist but also as the central figure in attracting to his standard a body of writers who, as a group, produced with Irving the most important collection of familiar essays in the era.

A final group, small in number but important in the development of the familiar essay in the last years of the era, is composed of those American essayists whose work reflects the influence of Charles Lamb's Essays of Elia.

It must be pointed out at once that although these divisions are demonstrably satisfactory at their extremes and centers, they are less so as they approach the lines which separate them one from the other. There is, to say it shortly, an element of convenience of study which is reflected in the occasionally arbitrary placing of some materials treated herein. Yet classifications must be made on broad grounds, and the fact that some few essays meander at will across boundary lines does not, I think, offer serious challenge to the fundamental organization.

A more difficult problem was posed by those essays which stood close to or astride the line of separation between the familiar and the formal essay. Even having the

workable definition of the familiar essay discussed above did not in some cases suffice, and it was therefore necessary to establish further criteria to decide what essays were in fact "familiar" as opposed to "formal." Simply stated, these criteria were set up by obverse iteration for each kind of essay treated in this study.

For example, the moral essay seems to possess two extremes: in one direction it is so similar to the moral tale written by authors such as Catherine Sedgwick and Eliza Leslie as to be hardly distinguishable from fiction; in the other, it approaches the sermon. In the first case, when the "story," which is so often used as a device in the familiar essay, grows to sufficient length relative to the total length of the piece as to become clearly the point of emphasis; when the attention to the elements of fiction--plot, character, setting, management of incident--becomes pronounced; and when, in consequence, the piece no longer exhibits the structure and tone of the familiar essay, it becomes a moral tale and thereby excludes itself from consideration here. Conversely, when in the other direction the moral essay assumes the character of a sermon--where the emphasis is exclusively placed on God, eternity, immortality, providence, and problems of dogma; where exhortation is so pronounced as to preclude familiarity; or where theology overtakes morality--it becomes a printed sermon and is excluded.

Correspondingly, the manners essay exhibits two extremes of its own. In one direction it becomes fiction, usually

through the expanded character, and in the other, the purpose book. In the first instance, when the character sheds the impersonality of the Theophrastan type and at the same time exhibits the fictional elements described for the moral tale, it is no longer an essay. Conversely, when the description of manners, etiquette, or social behavior becomes so involved with the mechanics of adjusting a bodice, serving a meal, or receiving of guests as to make the purpose of the essay completely instructional, the manners essay becomes a how-to-do-it manual and is thus excluded.

For the travel essay similar extremes serve as boundaries. Such an essay becomes fiction when the incidents of the journey or characters met along the way assume the paramount importance instead of the "feeling" aroused by sight of these characters or of mountains, rivers, and customs of strange peoples. On the other extreme is the guide book, the "How To Live in London for Two Hundred Dollars A Year" treatise, the topographical and geographical essay, and the local history.

And so on. For each area of the familiar essay similar boundaries exist--limits so similar as to make further particularization tedious. And when these limits are added to the standards of tone, style, subject matter, and form established for the familiar essay by the composite definition contributed to by Professors Bryan, Crane, Shelly, and Law, the resulting apparatus provides a satisfactory set of criteria for selection.

Of equal importance with the problems of definition and organization was the problem of selection for study of representative essays from the period under consideration, for it rapidly became clear that even within so brief a span as twenty years there was an embarrassing abundance of material. Broadly speaking, the major sources for the American familiar essay of this (and later) periods were, first, magazines of all kinds, but especially the "general" and the "literary" magazines; second, and it must be recognized, a poor second, newspapers; third, almanacs, pamphlets, and, beginning approximately in the middle of the period, gift books and various other types of annuals containing essays by various hands; and fourth, separately published volumes, either by single authors or groups of authors, usually containing reprints of essays which had previously appeared in periodicals, but occasionally, as in the case of Lydia Child's The Coronal (1832), having some newly published essays.

There were of course countless minor sources, for its characteristically brief form and ubiquitous nature permitted the familiar essay to appear in such disparate places as John Pierpont's First Class Book (1823), Henry Megarey's The Wanderer: New and Original (1821), and various publications of the American Sunday School Union and the American Tract Society, where it provided, at least to modern eyes, partial easement of the ponderousness which otherwise pervaded these printings.

Even such a wide range of sources gives little indication of the enormous number of familiar essays printed during this period. Short of actually enumerating every essay in every source, it is still possible to estimate a rough total for at least the magazines, the major source, by selecting representative magazines from different parts of the country in the early, middle, and late years of the period; by establishing an average number of essays per volume and by noting the average life span (number of volumes) for such magazines; and by then using simple multiplication. Fortunately, Frank Luther Mott's standard, four-volume study of American magazines has provided some of the rough figures we need: approximately 200 magazines were established or were operating during our period, and their average life was probably two volumes.¹³ A survey of magazines selected for the present study reveals that roughly thirty familiar essays were printed in each volume of the general and literary magazines. If we allow two volumes per magazine and thirty familiar essays per volume for 200 magazines, we may calculate a total of some 12,000 familiar essays in the magazines alone during the period.¹⁴ And even this figure is, despite much pirating and reprinting of essays from magazine to magazine, essentially a conservative one, since although there were some magazines such as

¹³ These figures are derived from the various tables and lists printed in appendices to Volume I of Professor Mott's A History of American Magazines (New York and London, 1930), pp. 787-809.

¹⁴ I have examined nearly a third of these.

Niles' Register and the Analectic which did not approach an average of thirty essays per volume, there were others such as the Constellation (New York City) and The Literary Casket (Hartford, Connecticut) which printed as many as seventy-five in every volume. To say it another way, only poetry--the incontestable champion of the belles-lettres in this respect--surpassed the familiar essay in sheer numbers which saw print between 1815 and 1835.

The problem of selection, therefore, arose early in the research for this study as a point of paramount importance. Since it was hardly advisable or even possible to attempt anything like full coverage, it was necessary to choose representative sources from which to work. In order to make the selection valid and truly representative of the entire group, three bases for choice were established: (1) sources to represent as many sections of the country as possible (that is, New England, the Middle Atlantic States, the West, the South); (2) sources to contain material published in the early, middle, and late years of the period; (3) sources to represent in rough proportion the four major sources of essay material earlier enumerated. It is perhaps unnecessary to add that primary rather than secondary materials have been given first attention, although secondary sources have been used where pertinent. In using the primary sources, I have silently corrected numerous printing errors.

To date, only one full-scale study of the essay in American literature has appeared, a doctoral thesis by

Adaline May Conway.¹⁵ It set out to survey American essayists and their writings from Cotton Mather to Paul Elmer More, and included such major figures as Franklin and Irving, Emerson and Holmes. Yet since it is a very short book to cover a field of such breadth (excluding the introduction and bibliography, it contains only seventy printed pages), and since it was produced at a time when the study of American literature was only beginning to rise above its status as stepchild in American graduate schools, it is neither exhaustive in its coverage nor reliable in its interpretations. Further, and this is a more significant point, Dr. Conway's definition of the essay, quoted earlier, clearly illustrates the inadvisability of attempting a genre study of the "Essay" in America without first limiting the type of essay to be studied and the period in which it is to be considered, and also without having for prior study the background material provided by more intensive investigation of specific, smaller areas.

For the ground, although broken, is not yet harrowed. Much has still to be done in the way of period studies such as are represented by E. C. Coleman's dissertation, "The Influence of the Addisonian Essay in America before 1810,"¹⁶ and by the present investigation, before another attempt at a treatment of the entire field can be profitably made.

¹⁵ The Essay in American Literature (New York, 1914).

¹⁶ Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Illinois, 1936.

Nevertheless, as John Livingston Lowes has remarked, "There are few things in the world more interesting than the disclosure of facts which illuminate and throw into fresh perspective a mass of other facts."¹⁷ And certainly Dr. Conway's pioneer attempt to examine the American essay provides at least a starting point for modern researchers in the area. Since 1914, American literary scholars, aware of the need for studies in the field and profiting from Dr. Conway's early work, have produced, in addition to those already mentioned, several studies of specific types of essays: Philip M. Hicks's The Development of the Natural History Essay in American Literature (1924); William Charvat's American Critical Thought, 1810-1835 (1936), which devotes a full chapter to "Criticism of Prose Style and the Essay"; Philip Marsh's "American Essays, 1770-1805: A Partial and Tentative List" (1949); Guy A. Cardwell's "Charleston Periodicals, 1795-1868" (1936);¹⁸ Frank Luther Mott's monumental History of American Magazines (4 Vols., 1930-1957), which discusses, though incidentally nonetheless valuably, some aspects of the essay as it appeared in the periodicals.

Scholarly articles and shorter studies have also whittled away at particular portions of the field. Many of these have contributed in an ancillary way while focusing attention upon some other area of study; these, together

¹⁷ "Teaching and the Spirit of Research," The American Scholar, II (January 1933), 36.

¹⁸ Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of North Carolina.

with their specific contributions, will be acknowledged in the bibliography of secondary sources appended to this study. Others, because they have contributed more directly, should be singled out for mention here. John McCloskey's "The Campaign of Periodicals after the War of 1812 for National American Literature" is central to an understanding of one of the forces that drove essayists in the National Period to voluminous composition.¹⁹ Professor McCloskey's theme has recently been the subject of a more extensive study in Benjamin T. Spencer's The Quest for Nationality.²⁰ Guy A. Cardwell's "The Influence of Addison on Charleston Periodicals, 1795-1860," like his dissertation, serves as corollary to E. C. Coleman's full-length study of Addisonian influence in an earlier period and to similar material in one part of the present dissertation.²¹ M. C. Howard's article, "The Maryland Gazette, an American Imitation of the Tatler and the Spectator," is of like value.²²

J. G. Duncan's "Literary Content of a Pioneer Michigan Newspaper," and two more recent dissertations provide material on specific periodicals and groups of periodicals that Frank Luther Mott, because of the encompassing nature of his study and its historical and chronological emphasis,

¹⁹ PMLA, L (March 1935), 262-273.

²⁰ Syracuse University Press, 1957.

²¹ SP, XXXV (July 1938), 456-470.

²² Maryland Historical Magazine, XXIX (December 1934), 295-298.

was not able to discuss except by generalization.²³

And the most recent treatment of a part of the field is the chapter on the personal essay from 1840 to the outbreak of the Civil War in Professor Carl Bode's study of mid-nineteenth century culture.²⁴

My own work, therefore, is an attempt to provide further material for a comprehensive treatment of the entire genre by filling in one of the remaining open areas: an examination of the familiar essay written in America between 1815 and 1835, with particular attention to the essay in American periodicals.

A brief statement about documentation is appropriate here, since the nature of the materials used as sources for this study seems to require one departure from the normal pattern of acknowledgment. Although all secondary sources and some of the primary sources are recorded in the standard manner, the myriad familiar essays from the periodicals, many of them unsigned and, if considered singly, of scant significance in the canon of American belles-lettres, are given no individual listings in the

²³ Michigan History, XXXIII (September 1949), 195-209. Wallace J. Bonk, "The Printing, Publishing, and Bookselling Activities of John P. Sheldon and His Associates in Detroit 1817-1830. A Study of the Detroit Gazette. . . ." Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Michigan, 1956. Benjamin M. Lewis, "A History and Bibliography of American Magazines, 1800-1810." Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Michigan, 1955.

²⁴ The Anatomy of American Popular Culture, 1840-1861 (Berkeley, California, 1959).

bibliography of primary sources appended to this dissertation. To supply such listings would require an unjustifiably large number of extra pages. Moreover, since the primary value of these anonymous and ephemeral pieces lies in the ideas and currents of emphasis reflected in clusters of them, I have thought it best to dispense with an unwieldy apparatus by including representative groups of essay titles in appropriate footnotes to the text and by reserving for full listing in the bibliography the titles of magazines, gift books, and annuals in which these essays appeared.²⁵

²⁵ Pursuant to the statement made in the conclusion to this study that a good modern edition could be made of some of the best essays of the period, I have supplied in Appendix B a selected list of essays from magazines, gift books, and annuals which might serve such a purpose.

CHAPTER II

THE ERA 1815-1835

There is no need today further to reinforce the argument that the study of a particular type of literature within a particular period of history benefits from an examination of the political, economic, social, and cultural aspects of the period in question. According to Levin L. Schücking: "Just as in natural history the characteristics of flora and fauna can only be recognized in association with the peculiarities of the locality, so in the history of literature existence and colouring and individuality proceed largely from the sociological soil from which the literary creation springs."¹ In his Literature and Society, written four years later, Albert Guérard came to essentially the same conclusion;² and more recently, R. P. Blackmur tersely acknowledged that "there is a sense . . . in which the profession of society and the profession of writing are the same."³

Nevertheless, to attempt to apply this generalization

¹ The Sociology of Literary Taste (London, 1944), pp. 8-9.

² Boston, 1935.

³ "A Feather-Bed for Critics," in Language as Gesture (New York, 1952), p. 400.

without refining it--to say, merely, that the literature composed in America between 1815 and 1835 reflects the "spirit of the age"--would be, because of the very breadth of such a statement, at best vague and at worst meaningless. It is necessary, therefore, to demonstrate the application of the broad statement to the specific area: to point out how, perhaps more persistently than any other genre of literature, the essay of this period reflects the social, economic, political, and cultural currents of its age.

To begin with, the type of familiar essay which, as has been pointed out earlier, was most popular in this period was the essay of social criticism, a type by its very nature originally so closely involved with its period as to have been studied by scholars of later ages as a source of information relevant to the social history of the Queen Anne era.⁴ Indeed, as Addison wrote in Spectator 435, his "Occasional Papers . . . take their Rise from the Folly, Extravagance, and Caprice of the present Age."⁵ And Addison echoed Hamlet in pointing out that the Spectator was to act as a mirror of its age, a concept closely adhered to by the early nineteenth century American followers of the English master.

⁴ R. D. O'Leary, The Essay (New York, 1928), p. 25. See also, Melvin R. Watson, Magazine Serials and the Essay Tradition 1746-1820, Louisiana State University Studies, Humanities Series Number Six (Baton Rouge, 1956), p. 3.

⁵ C. Gregory Smith, ed., The Spectator (London, 1907). All references to the Spectator are to this Everyman's Library edition, and will appear in the text thus: (S. 435).

Moreover, even those essays not as imitative of Addison reflect the excitement of the age over such things as geographical expansion, public education, improvement and advancement of "culture," and the idea of progress. It is not unusual, for example, to find in a belletristic essay a distinct undercurrent of "Americanism" or "westwardism." On occasion, too, an essayist might betray his position by allowing a sharp critical digression to interrupt an otherwise clearly familiar essay. In point, one of "Twig 'Em, Junior's" many efforts turned briefly but outspokenly to a defense of the "needy mechanic and laborer": "When the man whom the bounty of God has raised from indigence and obscurity, to opulence and distinction, employs the influence wealth imparts in meaner pursuits, and uses his utmost exertion to 'grind the face' of the poor man, and oppress the needy mechanic and laborer, we are astonished at his unnatural and hardened inhumanity. . . ." ⁶ Clearly, this essay and a considerable number of others ⁷ are representative of the groundswell of opinion favoring free public education for all, especially the laboring and mechanic classes, which, Professor Carl Bode has recently shown, won victories

⁶ Untitled essay, Boston Weekly Magazine, III (Jan. 9, 1819), 34.

⁷ See, for example, other essays by the same writer in the Boston Weekly Magazine throughout 1819, essays by various hands in The Microcosm, I (1835), and others by various hands in Sarah Josepha Hale's Ladies' Magazine, II (1829).

over active opposition in the 1820's.⁸

Seventeen years later, at the end of our period, when the floodtide of immigration was at a new height,⁹ the famous naturalist, ornithologist, and essayist, John James Audubon, wrote "Sailing Down the Ohio" for The Family Magazine of New York City. After a moderately (for the era) effusive paean to the Ohio River country, Audubon sourly remarked:

When I reflect that all this grand portion of our Union, instead of being in a state of nature, is now more or less covered with villages, farms, and towns, where the din of hammers and machinery is constantly heard; that the woods are fast disappearing under the axe by day, and the fire by night; that hundreds of steam-boats are gliding to and fro, over the whole length of the majestic river, forcing commerce to take root and to prosper at every spot--when I see the surplus population of Europe coming to assist in the destruction of the forest, and transplanting civilization into its dark recesses--when I remember that these extraordinary changes which have all taken place in the short period of twenty years, I pause, wonder, and although I know all to be the fact, can scarcely believe its reality.¹⁰

Thus, although most of the essay consists of elaborate praise of natural beauty, such a paragraph as this indicates that

⁸ The American Lyceum (New York, 1956), pp. 27-29.

⁹ In the decade 1820-1830, the estimated number of immigrants was 231,400; in the decade 1830-1840, this number increased to 540,000. See George Tucker, Progress of the United States in Population and Wealth. . . . (New York, 1843), pp. 128, 135.

¹⁰ III (April 1835), 272-273.

Audubon not only had forgotten his own Haitian birth while criticizing the influx of foreign "surplus population," but also that he, like many another nature essayist of the era, was willing to couple his praise of nature with an indictment of progress--nature's foe.

There is no need to labor the point. These examples, supported by others which will be cited as this chapter proceeds, indicate that the essayists were closely involved with contemporary developments. It is desirable, therefore, to draw the outlines of the period by sketching these developments in brief.

Political, Economic, and Social Developments. In 1815, the Mississippi River formed the western boundary of the United States; the southern frontier, generally speaking, was the thirty-first parallel, with Canada forming the northern limit. All told, the young nation encompassed some 1,000,000 square miles--an area which was to more than double in size by June 15, 1836, with the entrance into the Union of Indiana (1816), Mississippi (1817), Illinois (1818), Alabama (1819), Maine (1820), Missouri (1820), Arkansas (1836), and Michigan (1836).

Under the successive administrations of Madison, Monroe, John Quincy Adams, and Jackson, America expanded her boundaries until they reached from the Great Lakes to Florida, and from the Atlantic to the Rocky Mountains. After the Great Lakes Disarmament in 1815-1816, and the Rush-Bagot

Agreement in 1817, the Canadian-United States boundary was extended along the forty-ninth parallel to the "Stony Mountains," thus making what has since proved to be the longest undefended frontier in political history. After the cession of Florida to the United States in 1819, and the voicing of the Monroe Doctrine in 1823, in the area from the Great Lakes to Cape Horn only in Belize, the Guianas, Bolivia, and the West Indies was there maintained European sovereignty--a state of affairs which contemporary essayists, with little attempt to conceal their Anglophobia, pointed to with satisfaction.¹¹

Accompanying the geographical expansion was a near doubling of the population: in 1810, the total figure was 7,239,881; by 1830 it had risen to 12,866,020. But of more significance to this study than mere total figures are three already well-known facts: (1) the population of the states and territories west of the Appalachians more than doubled between 1810 and 1820;¹² (2) the populations of principal

¹¹ See, for example, the following anonymous essays: "American Literature," American Athenaeum, I (May 19, 1825), 33; "The Triumph of Liberty and Republicanism," Atkinson's Casket, No. 2 (February 1833), p. 76-77.

¹² In 1810: 1,080,000; 1820: 2,234,000. See Tucker, Progress, pp. 86-87.

cities in both East and West also grew rapidly;¹³ (3) although before 1820 less than a twentieth of the total population lived in communities of eight thousand or over, by 1840 more than a twelfth lived in such places, and more than a ninth in towns larger than two thousand.¹⁴

The westward movement, of course, swelled the population totals of such western cities as Cincinnati,¹⁵ in which a rising population was conducive to the founding of local periodicals; they, in turn, extolled in their pages the beauties of (and the advantages to be found in) their particular areas and attempted to provide their readers with what was considered to be matter of "literary interest." The usual thing was a "corner" devoted to verse, most of it nondescript but sometimes containing stanzas from some famous poet (Thomson, Young, Milton, Shakespeare). There was, too, a prose "Miscellany," which was of like makeup: a good deal of mediocre writing occasionally spiced with

13	CITY	1810	1830
	Boston	33,250	61,392
	New York	96,373	202,589
	Philadelphia	91,874	161,410
	Baltimore	35,583	80,825
	Charleston (S. C.)	24,711	30,289
	New Orleans	17,242	46,310

Table from Samuel Eliot Morison and Henry Steele Commager, The Growth of the American Republic, 4th ed.. (New York, 1950), I, 502.

¹⁴ Tucker, pp. 128, 135. See also, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., The Age of Jackson (Boston, 1945), p. 9.

¹⁵ In 1800, the population total was 750; by 1850, it had risen to 82,000. See Emerson Davis, The Half-Century (Boston, 1851), pp. 75-81.

excerpts from writers of note (Addison, Dr. Johnson, Goldsmith).¹⁶

The move toward urbanization, generally speaking, in both East and West, which was to increase in tempo with each decade of the century, provided, as we shall see, additional areas of comment for the essayists.¹⁷

Between 1815 and 1837, nearly a hundred Indian treaties were concluded, with the result that emigrants rushed westward, eager to exploit the several millions of acres that had been relinquished by the Creeks, Sacs, Foxes, Chippewas, and other tribes who had been more or less forcibly moved to the trans-Mississippi West.¹⁸ Not only was this an important political and geographical phenomenon, for writers pounced on the subject of the red man, who for them represented first-rate material. Assiduous amateurs, often with the title of "Doctor," armed with scant knowledge but possessed of an overfull pen and a smattering of Rousseau, extolled the "noble savage" in their praise-of-the-wilderness effusions.¹⁹ On the other hand, the more accomplished

¹⁶ Ralph L. Rusk, The Literature of the Middle Western Frontier (New York, 1925), I, 154.

¹⁷ See, for example, the following anonymous essays: "Native Scenes," The Boston Lyceum, I (November 15, 1827), 214-223; untitled essay, Boston Weekly Magazine, III (January 23, 1819), 42; "Manners at an Inn," Literary Casket, I (November 25, 1826), 167; "On Dying at Home," Constellation, II (February 19, 1831), 108.

¹⁸ Morison and Commager, I, 488.

¹⁹ See, for example, a "doctor's" "Rambles of a Naturalist," Pearl, IV (February 14, 1835), 186.

and sensitive William Gilmore Simms composed in his "The Indian Character" prose which in its melodiousness and sonority recalled Freneau's poem, "The Indian Burying Ground," and which in its perceptive and observant qualities looked forward to Thoreau.²⁰

New settlers for the West came not only from the Atlantic Seaboard. Between 1810 and 1840 more than 900,000 Europeans arrived at the Atlantic docks, ready to make their homes in America; and more than half of this number²¹ immediately struck out westward over the Alleghenies--another fact often alluded to by the essayists, who inconsistently deplored the "invasion" of the United States by the "surplus population of Europe"²² and welcomed the "infusion of new blood" for its strength and "vital energy."²³

However, growth and expansion are only one side of American history during this period. In the eighteenth century a desire for cultural independence had begun to rise almost as early as the desire for political emancipation.²⁴

²⁰ The Family Magazine, III (June 1835), 119-120.

²¹ Tucker, pp. 86-87.

²² See note 10.

²³ John Neal, "English and American Women," The Albion, VII (June 28, 1828), 22-23.

²⁴ John Trumbull, Essay on the Uses and Advantages of the Fine Arts (New Haven, 1770); cited in Robert E. Spiller et al, eds., The Literary History of the United States (New York, 1948), I, 164. There are several good discussions of this point. Succinct and provocative ones are Lewis Leary's "Poets and Essayists," LHUS, I, 162-176; Gilbert Chinard's "The American Dream," LHUS, I, 192-215. A recent and thorough treatment is Benjamin T. Spencer's The Quest for Nationality (Syracuse University Press, 1957).

With the dawn of the nineteenth century this cultural movement gathered strength in areas already worked, and it began to break new ground in others. The founding of historical, "philosophical," and cultural societies, which in the eighteenth century had been almost imperceptible after the organization of the Philosophical Society of Philadelphia by Franklin (1744), now began to occur regularly. In Salem, Massachusetts, the East India Marine Society, "to collect facts relative to the physical and natural history of the ocean," was incorporated in 1801; thirty-five years later, this same society provided Nathaniel Hawthorne with rich material for "The Custom House" preface to The Scarlet Letter. The New York Historical Society, established in 1804, published its first volume in 1809, a year after the founding of the American Academy of Fine Arts, also in New York City--conveniently enough for Washington Irving and others of the Knickerbockers, who frequented these societies' libraries for both pleasure and profit. All told, between 1801 and 1839, at least twenty-four major ("National" or "American") societies were formed;²⁵ and there were countless local ones for which there are no reliable data, although each was stumped for by its local

²⁵ Chapters on the individual states in D. B. Warden's three-volume Statistical, Political, and Historical Account of the United States of North America. . . . (Edinburgh, 1819) provide information on many of these. See also various portions of Emerson Davis's The Half-Century.

newspaper and magazine through announcements of programs, subscriptions, and plans.

Not all of these organizations are important, by their very founding, to this study. Nevertheless, certain of them, by their accumulation of libraries, publication of journals or bulletins, and dissemination of culture through lectures, musical "evenings," and sponsorship of lyceums or similar quasi-organized educational opportunities, reflect the growing interest of the era in things cultural.²⁶ Short-lived as many of the local groups and some of the national groups were, ineffectual as some of the national and more of the local ones must have been, and chauvinistic as the expressed aims of many of both sorts assuredly were, the growth of these societies, like the rush of eager essayists into print, composed a portion of the answer to the persistent question, "Where is our national culture?"

Nor could the essayists refrain from enthusiastic comment about the advances made by education, especially public education, in our period. Moreover, despite their partisan attitude, these essayists grounded their assertions on figures. In 1801, there had been only twenty-five colleges in the nation: seven in New England, six in the Middle States, nine in the South, three in the West.

²⁶ See Robert E. Riegel's brief discussion of this point in Young America 1830-1840 (Norman, Oklahoma, 1949), pp. 405-406.

Before 1840, this number had risen to 173, a breakdown of which total reinforces the significance of the westward movement of our population.²⁷

Two phases of education, education for the laboring and artisan classes and education for women, provided the most often iterated subjects for the periodical writers. Of course, the subject was a rich one for the polemicists, with whom this study does not concern itself; but as has been shown by the example cited earlier,²⁸ even the familiar essayists, and particularly the followers of Addison, found room for reference to the problem. As the editor of Aladdin's Lamp put it in his opening address to readers: "There will be essays from better pens . . . a ready outlet for our thoughts and experiments. . . . We intend to promote two other interests. The first, and most pressing, is to alleviate the condition of poor

²⁷ The figures break down as follows:

New England (Me., N. H., Vt., Mass., R. I., Ct.) . . .	19
Middle States (N. Y., N. J., Pa., Del., Md., D. C.) .	50
South (Va., N. C., S. C., Ga., Fla.)	27
Southwest (Ala., Miss., La., Ark., Tenn.)	29
Northwest (Mo., Ky., Ohio, Ind., Ill., Mich., Wis., Iowa)	48

Figures are from Tucker, pp. 143-145.

²⁸ See notes 6 and 7. See also the following anonymous essays: "Female Education," American Athenaeum, I (August 18, 1825), 149; "An Essay on Modern Education. By a Lady of Fifteen," The Boston Lyceum, I (March 15, 1827), 115-119. A Mrs. Bell, who regularly sent items to the Philadelphia and Baltimore magazines of the era, contributed "An Essay on the Education of Females" to Atkinson's Casket, No. 11 (November 1834), pp. 505-507.

women. . . ."²⁹ The Microcosm (New Haven) was equally outspoken in its role as women's champion.³⁰ And the jocular writers had a marvelous time with the theme. For instance, the unknown composer of "Conversation,"³¹ after asserting that this pastime is one of the greatest pleasures of life and that it is, of course, "enhanced by every increase of knowledge," concludes that women, too, should have the advantage of education primarily so that they will be better conversationalists at home (and therefore make their husbands' lives more pleasurable) and in society (so that acquaintances will see that the men have married wisely).

It will become more apparent as this study proceeds that a cultural development of first importance to the American writer in general and to the essayist in particular, was that of the growth of the popular press. Within these two decades unprecedented numbers of American magazines and newspapers were founded. From about forty magazines in 1810 and nearly a hundred in 1825, the total

²⁹ No. 1 (November 1833), p. 1. Apparently there was never another issue of this ill-starred journal.

³⁰ See, for example, the unsigned "General Principles of Education," I (November 1834), 18-20; Mrs. Serena Dwight's "Education for the Married Life," I (September 1835), 187-190; P. H. E.'s "Influence of Woman," I (May 1835), 126-128; E. G. Smith's "Education for Home," II (April 1836), 97-102.

³¹ The American Magazine, I (May 1835), 394.

swelled to more than two hundred³² by the time Emerson's Nature (1836) provided a new direction for the New England thinkers. That the majority of these magazines experienced extremely short lives seemed not to matter: Antaeus-like, for every fall there was at least a twofold recovery.

The newspaper experienced a similar burgeoning. In 1800 there were in the United States some 200 newspapers: seventeen dailies, seven tri-weeklies, thirty bi-weeklies, and one hundred forty-six weeklies. By 1810 the total number had increased to 359; but between 1810 and 1830 more than 600 new organs were established, and by 1840 New York City alone contributed seventy-five papers to a national total of 1,400.³³

The year 1815, the annus primus of our two-decade era, was especially significant from the standpoint of the periodical press, for it was during this year that the application of steam power to printing, first attempted in November 1814 by the London Times, took firm hold in the print shops of America and encouraged periodical publishing by more rapid production, more variety of layout, more

³² Mott, American Magazines, I, 120-121. In his "Chronological List" (I, 787-809), Professor Mott lists 203 journals as having been founded between 1815 and 1835.

³³ Davis, Half-Century, pp. 93-94. Cf. a statement in The Literary and Philosophical Repertory, II (January 1815), 150: "In the United States there are 290 weekly, 39 twice a week, 18 three times a week, and 28 daily newspaper establishments, making a total of 374 [sic], which may be considered as short of the truth."

efficient impress, and strikingly reduced costs.

Yet steam power, despite its importance, was only one of a series of mechanical improvements which the printing industry was to enjoy during (and just before and after) our period. George Clymer of Philadelphia, who had begun construction of his Columbian Iron Press in 1807, secured an English patent for his invention in 1818; his press, which did away with the screw as agency for impress power and substituted for it the fulcrum principle with a series of levers set in action by a bar, was perhaps the most notable contribution of an American inventor to the improvement of the flat-bed press. Clymer's work was improved upon by Peter Smith, Daniel Treadwell, and Samuel Rust, who produced machines of greater simplicity but of similar principles, and especially by Dr. William Church, who brought into use in 1821 a new method of ink distribution by means of rollers.

It was Church, too, who designed and patented in 1822 what Lawrence C. Wroth has called "the most elaborate and largely conceived development in the art of printing since the original invention of Gutenberg."³⁴ This was a new type-casting and composing machine which automatically distributed the finished letters and fed them into a magazine from which they were drawn and composed by keyboard

³⁴ "Printing in the Period 1784-1860." In Hellmut Lehmann-Haupt, The Book in America (New York, 1939), p. 73. Mr. Wroth's cogent essay has provided the material for much of this discussion.

operation. After use, the types were not distributed by hand or machine but were returned to the melting pot of the casting machine.

As the printing press changed its form and mechanical principles of operation in the period between 1790 and 1825, so too did the paper-making industry keep pace with developments of its own. In 1799 there was secured in England the first patent for the Fourdrinier machine which in time was to alter completely the paper-making trade.³⁵ This machine was followed by John Dickenson's simpler mechanism in 1809 and by the first American patent taken out by Thomas Gilpin of Wilmington, Delaware, in 1816. Gilpin's machine, moreover, was the first in this country to make paper in a continuous roll, thereby setting the stage for the mass-production, continuous-printing techniques which were to follow after the introduction of the Napier cylindrical press and the "Hoe Type Revolving Machine" into American printing in 1847.

American magazines took a lively interest in these technical developments, especially in those concerned with the machinery of printing. Frequent references were made to the "advantages" held by English printers who, because of their better financial position, were able to install the newest equipment for printing and engraving, while the

³⁵ The Book in America, p. 75. For a fuller description of this and other paper-making machines and the processes they used, see pp. 74-76.

younger American firms, still struggling to make ends meet, could only look hopefully to the future. A note in the New-York Mirror glumly observed: "The London Courier is now printed by a machine, constructed by a Mr. Napier, which is capable of throwing off considerable more than two thousand an hour. On one occasion it produced at the rate of two thousand eight hundred and eighty per hour. No new steam apparatus is employed, but two men alternately turn a fly wheel, which acts as an impelling power."³⁶

With regard to engravings, American editors' position during the 1820's was equally defensive, in spite of the establishment of the American Art Union and its rapidly increasing activity. In the Preface to the first number of The Token, after acknowledging that this annual was modeled after the "beautiful volumes, which appear annually in London under the general title of Souvenirs," Samuel G. Goodrich remarked, apologetically: "In a first attempt to emulate these productions, the Publisher could not hope, in all respects, to rival his models." Though he stoutly defended The Token's literary "department" against the British annual's, which was "light and trifling," he hoped that readers would overlook the "inferior" quality of the engravings, which could not compare with the "most

³⁶ I (January 3, 1824), 183.

exquisite specimens" of the British.³⁷ The modest Mr. Goodrich, however, gave way to the mercurial N. P. Willis, who edited The Token for 1829 and who made no such apology for his volume. His Preface asserted that "exertions" had been made to make the annual "interesting and valuable," that the contributions were "all original, and from native writers," and that the engravings too were by "native artists"—with the implication that if the contents or engravings were in any way weak, they were at least "American." But Goodrich returned as primary editor in the 1833 Token, and his Preface again betrayed uncertainty about American art work and contained an apology for including European engravings. It is to be hoped, he pleaded, that "the great beauty of many of them will compensate for the fact that they are from designs of European origin."³⁸

Responding to the technical advances in printing, type-casting, and composing machinery, and to the increased demand by American printers for their product, American paper mills grew in number from a few more than 200 mills producing half a million reams of paper in 1810 to more than twice that number producing ten times that

³⁷ The Token; A Christmas and New Year's Present. 1828 (Boston, 1827), Preface, n. p.

³⁸ The Token . . . 1833 (Boston, 1832), Preface, n. p. For further discussion of this point, see Ralph Thompson, American Literary Annuals and Gift Books (New York, 1936), pp. 40-48.

amount in 1840. It is significant, too, when viewed in the light of magazine- and newspaper-establishment figures, that by 1840 there were paper mills in twenty states and the District of Columbia.

The publishing trade, aided materially by the technical advances in printing and paper-making, experienced a growth of its own. The house of Harper, founded in 1817 as the printing firm of James and John Harper, began large-scale reprinting of works by contemporary and earlier authors. On August 5, 1817, 2,000 copies of Seneca's Morals were issued; on December 3 of the same year, 2,500 copies of Mair's Introduction to Latin; and on April 17, 1818, 500 copies of Locke's Essay on the Human Understanding. Public acceptance of these editions, good from the start, grew steadily each year, so that in 1833, having added to their staff, enlarged their quarters, and sought new markets as far west as Cincinnati, J. & J. Harper, Printers, became Harper & Bros., Publishers and Printers. Nor did the success story falter, for by mid-century Harper had produced 1,549 works in 2,028 volumes, of which 722 works were original and 827 were reprints.³⁹

³⁹ The Round Table (New York City), III (January 6, 1866), 10. In this issue, and in successive weekly numbers, The Round Table printed a series of "Sketches of the Publishers," providing valuable data, some of which is not available elsewhere, on publishers, sales figures, payments to authors, developments in sales and printing techniques, and book auctions.

D. Appleton & Company, established in New York City in 1825 as a general store, soon began specializing in book sales, and in 1831 entered the publishing field with Crumbs from the Master's Table; or, Select Sentences, Doctrinal, Practical, and Experimental. A year later, Gospel Seeds and A Refuge in Time of Trouble and Pestilence were issued during the cholera epidemic which had struck like lightning along the Eastern Seaboard.⁴⁰

The stories of other publishers--Wiley, who was able to distribute 3,500 copies of James Fenimore Cooper's The Pioneers by noon of the first day of issuance;⁴¹ Carey and Lea, who later took over Cooper's works and, with the aid of Darley's illustrations, were able to add materially to the American novelist's international reputation; A. S. Barnes and Burr; Dick and Fitzgerald; and other publishers in other cities--could be added here. But such is not necessary to prove the point: this was the golden age for the founding of the great houses, in spite of the wrangle over copyright, the wave of literary piracy, and the dearth of potentially profitable original American material for the press.

In this twenty-year period, too, the three prose genres of American belles-lettres were subject to developments of the first importance. Alexander Cowie has

⁴⁰ The Round Table, III (January 13, 1866), 26.

⁴¹ Thomas R. Lounsbury, James Fenimore Cooper, American Men of Letters Series (Boston, 1882), p. 41.

most recently shown that during the first two decades of the nineteenth century the American novel slowly evolved from the "balderdash" of George Watterston [in The Lawyer (1808) and Glencarn (1810)], through the better but still discouragingly poor work of such writers as Samuel Woodworth [The Champions of Freedom (1816)], until it was able in the hands of James Fenimore Cooper to enter "international literary competition on something like even terms."⁴²

The American drama experienced a development of its own. At the end of the eighteenth century the American theatre had been a going concern, with regular presentations of Shakespeare and Kotzebue. Original American drama had yet to arrive, even though Royall Tyler's The Contrast had been a cultural success as early as 1787. However, at the beginning of the new century, James Nelson Barker, William Dunlap, and later, John Howard Payne and Robert Montgomery Bird, began to bring American drama to a point where, although it could not yet produce a craftsman to rival Cooper in fiction or Irving in the essay, it gave promise of results which were to see some initial fulfillment after Dunlap published his History of the American Theatre in 1832.

In the same period the American familiar essay rose

⁴² The Rise of the American Novel (New York, 1948), pp. 69-114 passim; p. 115.

to a position of unquestionable importance, both as a genre to be examined for its own sake and for its immense popularity, and also as a genre which, it will be shown in this study, constituted a kind of middle ground between the predominantly non-fictional prose of the eighteenth century and the short story which was to begin its century-and-a-half reign of popularity in America in the second half of our era.

The Essay in the Literature of the Era. The reasons for the burgeoning of the familiar essay in this period are not difficult to adduce. First, as we have seen, periodicals published daily, weekly, bi-weekly, monthly, quarterly, and in other sequences too irregular to detail here, experienced a phenomenal growth, thereby providing more space for publication of at least shorter literary efforts. Nor is it only at this distance in time that such growth is perceivable. As early as 1824 a doggerel poet wrote:

This is the Age of Magazines--
Even skeptics must confess it:
Where is the town of such renown⁴³
That has not one to bless it?

This unprecedented increase in the founding of magazines had begun slowly in the last decade of the eighteenth century, continued steadily through the first year or two of

⁴³ Cincinnati Literary Gazette, I (February 28, 1824), 72. Quoted by Frank Luther Mott in American Journalism (New York, 1941), p. 207.

the nineteenth century, picked up perceptibly after 1804, and reached full flower in the period after 1815.⁴⁴ An early student of the first years of the nineteenth century notes that at least 137 "literary" magazines were established before 1833,⁴⁵ and the more reliable Frank Mott avers: "Several hundred quarterly, monthly, and weekly periodicals were published, for longer or shorter terms, during the first third of the nineteenth century."⁴⁶

Second, the continuing cry for an American literature, which had had clear voice since before the outbreak of the first war with Britain,⁴⁷ and which had been reiterated by Freneau, Barlow, Brockden Brown, Timothy Dwight, and a host of others, spurred not only American authors but also throngs of dilettantes and poetasters to engage actively in producing such a body of work, even though much of this latter group's writings would see print only through personal subsidy or in the more obscure local journals.

Third, in the years before 1815 a genre had evolved,

⁴⁴ Mott, American Magazines, I, 120-121. In 1804, magazines were admitted to the privilege of mail, with the result that a spurt of new foundings occurred.

⁴⁵ William B. Cairns, On the Development of American Literature from 1815 to 1833 (Madison, Wisconsin, 1898), pp. 70-85.

⁴⁶ American Journalism, pp. 207-208. Mott had access to files of periodicals not mentioned in the Cairns' study.

⁴⁷ See note 24.

peculiarly American, which is known now as the popular newspaper "column," the earliest specimens of which, germane to this study, had appeared under the title of "From the Shop of Colon and Spondee," weekly contributions of Joseph Dennie and Thomas G. Fessenden to the Farmer's Museum of Walpole, New Hampshire.⁴⁸ Likewise, the newspaper editorial, which had grown from a sort of primitive pamphlet and in the eighteenth century had taken the form of a contributed letter to the weekly paper, evolved before 1815 into the periodical essay in a regular series, such as the "Moral Monitor," by Nathan Fiske in the Massachusetts Spy, and the "Remarker," by several hands in the Monthly Anthology. As Fred Pattee has exclaimed: "All at once elegantly written essay departments week after week, signed 'Lounger,' 'Remarker,' and the like. They satisfied their times to the full: they became the ruling literary form, the fashion of the day. There was nothing they could not treat, religious or secular, ancient or modern. A newspaper without its essay column was like a modern sheet without its editorial page."⁴⁹

In a sense, the familiar essay of 1815-1835 had been

⁴⁸ The best study of Dennie and the essayists of the pre-1815 era is Milton Ellis's Joseph Dennie and His Circle: A Study of American Literature from 1792 to 1812 (Austin, Texas, 1915).

⁴⁹ The First Century of American Literature 1770-1870 (New York, 1935), p. 208. It should be pointed out that these columns contained polemics and formal essays as well familiar essays.

prepared for by the gradual shifts of emphasis that had taken place in American writing before the nineteenth century opened. From the date of the first colonial settlements on the Eastern Seaboard until well toward the middle of the eighteenth century, American writers and readers had concerned themselves primarily with religious matters. Even as late as the 1740's such was the case: Frank Luther Mott's lists of bestsellers, which he compiled for his Golden Multitudes,⁵⁰ reveal that six books meet the requirements in sales figures that he set up for this decade; and of these six, four are concerned with religion (the other two are Pope's Essay on Man and Samuel Richardson's Pamela). Gradually, as the century drew closer to the time of Lexington and Concord, and as Americans became engrossed in things political, patriotic essays and political polemics began to find their way into periodicals in increasing numbers. As Moses Coit Tyler pointed out sixty years ago, the chief trait of American literature in the period 1763-1785 was its concern with the problems of American society; and of American society in a peculiar condition--aroused, inflammable, in a state of alarm for its own existence, but also in a state of resolute combat for it.⁵¹

After 1760, then, the matter of religion had to

⁵⁰ New York, 1947.

⁵¹ The Literary History of the American Revolution, 1763-1783 (New York, 1897), I, 6.

surrender its primacy to the matter of politics. A glance at the range of titles in Charles Evans's American Bibliography illustrates how rapidly this shift occurred; and Frank Mott's lists again confirm the assertion by placing The Federalist papers high among popular favorites of the 1780's. More significant to this study, however, are the remaining books on the 1780 list (Trumbull's M'Fingal, Richardson's Clarissa, Cowper's The Task, Burns's Poems), which as a group hint that yet another shift of emphasis was under way—one that was to be clearly reflected in the post-1815 essay.

Actually, this final shift was not so truly a shift of emphasis as it was a change in direction. The concern of the writer with his society had not flagged; it had merely turned its glance from "The Noble Efforts of a Virtuous, Free, and United People [to] Extirpate Tyranny, and Establish Liberty and Peace"⁵² to other positive currents of national sentiment: the rising glory of America, the return to nature, the westward expansion, and the inculcation of morality.

It is understandable, too, that the desire for fuller expression of the "National genius" should be reflected most discernibly in the numbers of essays and poems produced, rather than in increased numbers of other forms of literature. To begin with, there were models aplenty for

⁵² The motto of Isaiah Thomas's Massachusetts Spy; or, The Worcester Gazette.

aspiring poets and essayists. In every city booksellers' shelves were laden with pirated and "legitimate" editions of Young, Gray, Thomson, and Pope; copies of the Spectator, the Tatler, the Citizen of the World, and the Rambler were as easy to come by as the American Tract Society reprints of Baxter's Saints' Everlasting Rest or the American Sunday School Union printings of Cruden's Concordance. And it was as easy for nineteenth century amateur writers to model their effusions after Addison as it had earlier been for the more accomplished Benjamin Franklin to do.⁵³ Noah Webster, outspoken though he was about America's cultural independence, admonished young American ladies that Addison should have first place in their libraries.⁵⁴ Samuel Miller, in A Brief Retrospect of the Eighteenth Century (1803), not only praised Franklin for having used Addison as a model but also clearly implied that modern young writers might do no better than to follow the identical path. And follow it they did--in all sections of the country.

The Hudson, New York, Library Association had "several copies" of the Spectator and the Rambler which

⁵³ Autobiography (New York, 1948), pp. 13-14. See also Elizabeth C. Cook, Literary Influences in Colonial Newspapers 1704-1750 (New York, 1912), pp. 4-5.

⁵⁴ Benjamin T. Spencer, The Quest for Nationality (Syracuse University Press, 1957), p. 36.

were extremely popular with "young lady readers."⁵⁵ The lenders' record book for the New Market Library, deposited in the Rutgers University Library by the Piscataway Public Library Association, provides a ledger-type account of the books borrowed by the library's fifty subscribers for the period from 1812 to 1843. Since the library's holdings were limited, it is possible to examine the entire ledger and hence get a fair idea of what books were popular at the time. Second to the Universal History (24 volumes) were the volumes of the Spectator, Idler, and Rambler, with Smollett's Roderick Random, although the most popular of the library's few novels (it outcirculated its nearest competitor, Charlotte Temple, by about three to one), a poor third. The works of Oliver Goldsmith, which in this era were the most popular model after Addison's and Dr. Johnson's, found little favor in New Jersey, for the volume was borrowed only rarely.⁵⁶ Young Rhode Islanders also were urged to look to Addison,⁵⁷ and although John Neal would have none of him,⁵⁸ readers of other articles

⁵⁵ The Rural Repository; or, Semi-Monthly Entertaining and Amusing Journal. . . . (Hudson, New York), I (August 7, 1824), 39. .

⁵⁶ The Journal of the Rutgers University Library, XXI (December 1957), 38-39.

⁵⁷ "Written Language," signed G. The Literary Journal and Weekly Register of Science and the Arts (Providence), I (March 1, 1834), 310-311.

⁵⁸ The Ladies' Miscellany (Boston), I (August 18, 1829), 134.

in The Ladies' Miscellany were directed "for their benefit" to the Augustan essayist.⁵⁹

Early in the century, writers just trying their literary wings could turn for help and encouragement to The British Essayists (1803): forty-five fat volumes containing not only the essays from twelve periodicals modeled after the Spectator but also contributing in Volume One a pontifical set of rules entitled "On the Nature and Origin of the Essay." Frequent articles on the requirements of the essay began to appear in many of the newly founded periodicals. In 1806: "It should be the aim of the periodical writer to introduce and diffuse a taste for useful and ornamental learning, in the engaging form of short and popular essays, which may be perused without much effort of intellect and without encroaching on the engagements of the high or stated employments of the middle class."⁶⁰ In 1823 the New-York Mirror, while declaring emphatically that the materials in its pages would be "AMERICAN," echoed the Spectator by saying: "As this publication is intended to combine instruction with amusement, its character will necessarily be miscellaneous; embracing a great variety of matters and subjects. A devotion, however, to the great

⁵⁹ I (March 10, 1829), 43; I (April 28, 1829), 72.

⁶⁰ The Literary Magazine and American Register (1806), p. 219. Quoted in Pattee, First Century of American Literature, p. 207.

interests of morality, is the governing principle which shall characterize it in every stage of its existence."⁶¹ Later in Volume One, the Mirror's praise of Addison shifts from mere echo to precise statement: "The pen of Addison effected wonders in reforming the manners of the age in which he lived. . . . His style and manner are both peculiarly adapted to the end intended. 'Vice and Folly blushed at their own deformity,' when reflected from the mirror he placed before them; and if they did not fly the circle of the polite, they at least found it necessary to borrow the garb of discretion and virtue."⁶² And the essay concludes with another elephantine hint to young writers: "A writer like Addison would do much good in this country at the present day."

There were, of course, available models for the prospective novelist to follow. Thomas Day's Sandford and Merton was a bestseller on both sides of the Atlantic. Richardson's Pamela had been republished in America by Franklin as early as 1744, and Scott's novels, the pride, almost the Bible, of the South, had made the fortune of many a pirate printer. We have noted the popularity of Roderick Random; and later in our period, Saint-Pierre's Paul and Virginia and Henry Mackenzie's The Man of Feeling

⁶¹ "Prospectus," I (August 2, 1823), 1.

⁶² "Female Character," The New-York Mirror, I (September 6, 1823), 44.

demonstrated their appeal for the general reader.⁶³

But the novel form presented difficulties to the writer which the essay did not, paramount among which was the problem of getting an original American novel into print. The reluctance of the American book publisher of this era to produce such works is well known. Why, his reasoning went, should I gamble on the work of an unknown American when I can be assured of a profit by reprinting Quentin Durward as soon as I can lay hold of one of Mathew Carey's new editions? And piracy involved no publisher in royalty payments. Not until after the end of our period, when men such as Irving and Cooper not only realized the difficulty involved in international copyright but also set about doing something to solve it, was there in sight any kind of protection for foreign authors; and even then, despite continuous agitation for such legislation by English and American authors alike, the century had to wait until 1891 for passage of the first International Copyright Law.

Then, too, compared to the obvious successes scored by essayists, budding novelists fared badly. Charles Brockden Brown had earlier tried to make a livelihood from

⁶³ The Journal of the Rutgers University Library, XXI (December 1957), 39. See also, material on the popularity of Paul and Virginia in Wallace J. Bonk, "The Printing, Publishing, and Bookselling Activities of John P. Sheldon and His Associates in Detroit 1817-1830," Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Michigan, 1956, p. 155 et passim.

novel writing, and he had failed. In spite of his later success, James Fenimore Cooper's first attempt at the form, the weak Precaution, was a dismal error. And the period between Brown's Clara Howard (which was also published in England as Philip Stanley) and Cooper's Precaution—nearly twenty years— was equally infertile for many another aspiring novelist.⁶⁴ On the other hand, essay-writing combined well with the various other journalistic tasks that the essayists, in the main, had to perform. Though it cannot be said that any essayist before Irving (and few after Irving until mid-century) made a living writing essays, his chances of success while composing short pieces of various kinds and while engaged in one of the jobs of periodical publication were notably better than the novelist's.

The novelists had to battle, also, traditionally stern and widespread American opposition to novel-reading, opposition which the essayists gleefully and, it would appear at times, almost maliciously joined.⁶⁵ Moreover, American detractors of novel-reading often turned for support to English critics who had adjudged the practice demoralizing.

More than a decade before the appearance of the first

⁶⁴ Alexander Cowie, The Rise of the American Novel (New York, 1948). See Chapters I, II, III.

⁶⁵ See, for example, "On the Pleasures of Reading—No. II," Port Folio, Fourth Series, III (February 1817), 154-159.

American novel, Vicesimus Knox had warned English youth of the perils of reading fiction by suggesting that novels not only contributed to the "corruption and degeneracy" of the age but also that they "unfit the mind for serious study."⁶⁶ Five years afterward, James Beattie agreed that romances were pernicious reading which bred a "dislike for history, and all the substantial parts of knowledge" and which could fill the innocent mind with "extravagant thoughts and too often with criminal propensities."⁶⁷ In both English and American editions Knox and Beattie appeared as favorites on American booksellers' lists throughout the first third of the nineteenth century, and editors of American periodicals regularly extracted and reprinted passages from both authors' works.

But the American essayists' favorite models, Addison, Steele, Dr. Johnson, and Goldsmith, had earlier inveighed

⁶⁶ Essays Moral and Literary (London, 1822; 1st ed., 1778), I, 92-97, 332, 413; II, 7-8, 445. Quoted by W. F. Gallaway, Jr., "The Conservative Attitude Toward Fiction, 1770-1830," PMLA, LV (December 1940), 1041-1059.

⁶⁷ Dissertations Moral and Critical (Dublin, 1783), I, 237. Compare Beattie's words with "Marmaduke Oldstyle's" in the Port Folio three decades later: "In the selection of those friends who are to be the chosen companions of our solitude, let us be ever strictly on our guard, lest, under the most attractive appearances, we should admit to our confidence and esteem, an insidious foe, lurking under the splendid garb of genius, blasting our happiness both here and hereafter. . . ." [Fourth Series, III (February 1817), 158.]

against romances,⁶⁸ and their strictures were understandably the ones most often echoed by the magazinists. In a series of twelve essays, "Observer" seized every opportunity to point out the evils that novel-reading could engender, especially for young ladies.⁶⁹ In the same year five unsigned essays on "Novel Writing" first point out that there are possible evils in imaginative fiction, but later grudgingly agree with Addison (S. 523 and Guardian 30) and Steele (Tatler 172) that as long as the artist maintains contact with reality--with the truths to be derived from Nature--his productions will probably be acceptable.⁷⁰ Even at the end of our period, and of course later in the century too, the prejudice against novels, especially against romances, continued.⁷¹ In his 1834 review of the "Writings of Bulwer," Edward S. Gould tried hard to be critically intelligent in judgment; but

⁶⁸ Goldsmith had been able to find some use for every sort of book except romances; these he called "no better than instruments of debauchery" (Citizen of the World, Letter LXXXVIII). Although Johnson had admired Fanny Burney and Richardson, he thought novels as a type "despicable" (see Idler 50, Adventurer 92). Professor Gallaway has dealt with this material in detail; for reference, see my note 66.

⁶⁹ The Rural Repository, I (November 27, 1824), 102-103.

⁷⁰ Boston Telegraph, May 20, 1824; see also these other issues: June 10, 1824; June 17, 1824; September 2, 1824.

⁷¹ As late as 1899 American newspapers, especially those in the mid-west, averred that the novels of Zola were injurious to the morals of young people. See the St. Louis Globe Democrat, Thursday, November 9, 1899.

the tenor of the age was difficult to counter. Though Mr. Gould wished to "give Bulwer his due on the score of his intellectual qualities," he hoped "to escape the appearance of speaking too well of a man" whose writings the age must consider as having "decidedly bad moral tendencies," writings which, Gould sighs in conclusion, "all moral considerations require us to condemn."⁷² The death blow, "at least in this writer's estimation," was dealt to such productions by a vitriolic essayist writing for The Microcosm early in 1836. After grudgingly admitting that "we would be slow to condemn the perusal of such fiction as that of Goldsmith's, Pollok's [sic], some of Scott's, and some of Miss Edgeworth's," the writer exhorts:

A lady of refined and pious sentiments could not easily bring upon herself a heavier calamity, than to yoke herself with one whose moral system had been palsied by imbibing the pestiferous influence of every piece of nonsense, to which passion or an ill-managed and corrupt imagination can give birth, and send forth upon the world. And we hope we shall be pardoned for saying, that a gentleman possessed of the good feelings of our nature, might as well take to his bosom a viper, whose venom should send coldness and death through his frame, as one whose heart, originally warm and kind, the temple of the social virtues, had become the seat of disquietude and disaffection; whose nerves had become incurably affected at the novelty and peril of her situation, while borne in the fairy's car to the aerial abode of their

⁷² The Literary and Theological Review (New York City), I (September 1834), 412-427.

enchantments, and whose thoughts were perpetually wandering from the realities of her home, to more inviting scenes of their own creation.⁷³

Even if the aspiring novelist could overcome these apparently insurmountable barriers of prejudice, difficulties of publication, and intricacies of composition, there was another circumstance to anticipate—one which at once favored the essayist and presented yet another obstacle to the novelist. It was clearly stated in the public print: "We think it better in most cases to say too little than too much. . . . The fact is, that voluminous papers are not very generally read in this country, however lucid or learned, or sound or sensible they may be. We are too busy, hasty, practical a people—those of us especially so, who belong to the operative class, and are obliged to make the most and best use, at least the most expeditious use, of all the little leisure we can get."⁷⁴ The perceptive Alex de Tocqueville was able four years later to say the same thing in nine words;⁷⁵ and

⁷³ "The Influence of Fiction upon the Moral Feelings and Domestic Happiness," The Microcosm, II (June 1836), 138-140. The essay is signed "L," and a contemporary hand in my copy attributes the essay to Lydia Huntley Sigourney.

⁷⁴ "Introduction," The Essayist (Boston), I (September 1831), 5-7. There are, of course, other similar statements; see Charles Lanman, Essays for Summer Hours (New York, 1841), "Preface," pp. ii-iv.

⁷⁵ Democracy in America, ed. Phillips Bradley (New York, 1954), II, 63: "Small productions will be more common than bulky books."

another visitor, Thomas Hamilton, though by no means a de Tocqueville either in sensitivity or accuracy of judgment, came to the same conclusion in 1833.⁷⁶

It must not be inferred, however, that the essayists had an easier time than the novelists had in getting into book print; collected editions of essays--bound volumes separately published--likewise suffered under the printing-publishing-profit problem, and although the magazines of the 1820's and 1830's, and to a lesser extent the newspapers, welcomed essayists' work, rare indeed are bound collections of American familiar essays in print before 1820. Even at the end of our period, when the usually phlegmatic and reserved Henry Tuckerman could exclaim, "We confess a partiality for the essay. In the literature of our vernacular tongue, it shines conspicuous, and is environed with the most pleasing associations,"⁷⁷ collected essays which saw print in hard covers constituted only a small percentage of the total number brought to light in the course of this investigation.

In the first third of the century, then, since the book market was not easily conquered, the American essayist had to look to the magazines for column space for his work. Yet before 1820 even these outlets--at least, the better-known magazines with the largest circulations--were

⁷⁶ Men and Manners in America (Edinburgh and London, 1833), I, 369, 381; II, 73-77.

⁷⁷ The American Quarterly Review, XIX (March 1836), 188.

reluctant to throw open their columns to native writers. In the years after 1790, the principal periodicals--The Columbian, Carey's American Museum, The Massachusetts Magazine, the New-York Magazine--although they had more or less regularly published original poems, essays, and sketches,⁷⁸ took the bulk of their material from British publications. After 1800, and continuing into the first years of our period, the general magazine adhered to the pattern set by its predecessors: much, usually at least half, of the total space was given to materials reprinted from British sources.

The tradition for this had been established, as has been shown, with the founding of the first periodicals on this side of the Atlantic, and had been adhered to throughout the eighteenth century. Before 1790 there had of course been an American literature; but much of it, especially the periodical literature with which type this study is primarily concerned, had been provincial and imitative, quite removed in style and manner, theme and idea, from the literature which was to come into being in the nineteenth century.⁷⁹ Not that there was to be in

⁷⁸ Interesting and original essays, even essay-serials, had appeared early: the "Old Bachelor" series in the Pennsylvania Magazine, I (March 1775), 111-113; Francis Hopkinson's "On Whitewashing," American Museum, I (January 1787), 62-68; the anonymous "The Visitant," American Museum, IV (August 1788), 115-117.

⁷⁹ Tyler, I, 22.

our period any sudden shift in style or quality; as this study demonstrates, many magazine writers of the second and third decades of the nineteenth century were as slavish in their imitations of European models as their fathers and grandfathers had been. But there was a change--as sudden a change as can occur in a literary movement--in theme and idea, the pulse of which is perhaps most readily felt in the contemporary periodicals.

In their chapter, "The Era of Good Feelings," Samuel Eliot Morison and Henry Steele Commager have pointed out that after the signing of the Treaty of Ghent, "every serious difficulty under which the young republic had labored since the War of Independence dropped out of sight. With national union achieved, a balance between liberty and order secured, a trifling national debt, and a virgin continent awaiting the plow, there opened a serene prospect of peace, prosperity, and social progress."⁸⁰ There was, however, more than an optimistic forward look. Yesterday provided for Americans a thoroughly satisfying retrospect, and there was no dearth of head-turning. Triumphs on the sea in the just concluded war, John C. McCloskey has shown, tempered the American mind into belief in its power to express itself in a literature

⁸⁰ The Growth of the American Republic, I, 432.

independent of any foreign influence.⁸¹ Periodical after periodical optimistically sought "to promote a taste, and inspire an ambition, for the beauties of original [American] composition; to explode prevailing errors, peculiar to American literature, to correct the perversions of vanity, check the aberrations of genius, and discountenance the follies of affectation."⁸² And by the time that Irving's Sketch Book found favor in the eyes of British reviewers, in eyes which earlier had been almost completely closed to the value of any American literary product, all but the most conservative American magazines had contributed their voices to the cheering throng.

One of the leaders of the "publish American writers" movement was the long-lived⁸³ and widely imitated⁸⁴ New-York Mirror, which began publication in 1823 under the joint editorship of Samuel Woodworth and George P. Morris. Although the title page of the new journal

⁸¹ "The Campaign of Periodicals after the War of 1812 for National American Literature," PMLA, L (March 1935), 262. See also, Benjamin T. Spencer, The Quest for Nationality, Chapter Two.

⁸² The Portico (Baltimore), II (August 1816), 111-112.

⁸³ The Mirror began publication in August 1823 and continued until December 1842, an outstanding record in this era.

⁸⁴ Magazines all over the East, but especially in New York and New England, borrowed material from the Mirror. Sometimes, as in the case of the New-England Magazine, acknowledgment was scrupulously given; more often, items and articles were lifted wholesale with no acknowledgment. See the Portland Transcript (1837) and the Literary Casket (1826).

proclaimed it to be a "Repository of Miscellaneous Literary Productions, in Prose and Verse," the "Prospectus" which appeared in the initial number made the editors' interpretation of the word "Miscellaneous" quite clear:

The character of this work is intended to be, literally and emphatically, AMERICAN. Not that interesting articles of foreign origin will be wholly excluded; for that would be neither just nor polite. But all the images reflected from our Mirror, whether they be natural or artificial, animate or inanimate, moral or political, shall be in accordance with our national habits, patriotism, and modes of thinking. To native genius, history, scenery, character, and incidents, we shall always give a decided preference, while they tend to keep alive and cherish an affection for literature and the moral virtues; and while they advocate the useful arts, domestic habits, and republican simplicity of manners.⁸⁵

Search of a portion of the Mirror's contents proves that the editors meant what they said. Though there are some borrowings from English print,⁸⁶ they are relatively few; and never do they occur in clusters as in the Port Folio and the Analectic, both journals which professed in equally firm accents their intention to print mainly "American" materials. In this regard the influence of

⁸⁵ The New-York Mirror, I (August 2, 1823), 1.

⁸⁶ I (August 16, 1823), 21-22: "Bachelor's Island," from The Mirror of Literature, Amusement, and Instruction (London). I (November 29, 1823), 141: "Sleep," from the Magazine of Knowledge (London). I (February 14, 1824), 229-230: "Nuptial Fondness," from Goldsmith's Citizen of the World.

the Mirror may not be underestimated, for it is traceable all over the Eastern Seaboard during this era. Mention has already been made of the borrowing from the Mirror by the local, more obscure periodicals. Yet the journal's influence is discernible in other ways.

Its espousal of the "prize-contest" formula encouraged the Mirror's "borrowers" not only to reprint the poems, tales, and essays which the parent magazine had selected as prizewinners but also to hold contests on their own. By the end of our period it was commonplace: rare was the journal, local or more widely circulated, which did not offer at least a "best poem of the year" prize, and most of them included rewards for original essays, and tales or sketches, all of which were of course to be "American."

A further indication of the Mirror's influence and general popularity may be observed in the number of times whole series of its essays and sketches by one or by several authors were later collected and republished in book form. Theodore Sedgwick Fay's Dreams and Reveries of a Quiet Man, William Cox's Crayon Sketches by an Amateur, and of course, Nathaniel P. Willis's Pencillings by the Way, were perhaps the most popular volumes among the one-author collections which appeared in our era.⁸⁷ Of

⁸⁷ Fay's book appeared in 1832, Cox's in 1833, and Willis's in 1835.

the eclectic volumes, The Atlantic Club-Book and The American Common-Place Book were widely purchased.⁸⁸ It is clear, moreover, that the make-up, general tone, and physical appearance of such volumes as these are very like the first American gift books, although, as Ralph Thompson has pointed out, the immediate spur for the American gift book was provided by the English The Forget Me Not of 1823,⁸⁹ which appeared just two years before The Atlantic Souvenir.

The Portico, a local journal of limited circulation, and the New-York Mirror, which began as the Portico did but which soon outran both limitations, are representative, then, of both categories of magazines which throughout our period gradually began (1) to provide space for original American short writings; (2) to offer "critical" advice to those who would become contributors, and in so doing to establish a base for what was to develop into the first real literary criticism in our literary history;⁹⁰ (3) to begin to pay, at first only a few but later many more, authors for accepted contributions; (4) to serve as

⁸⁸ The Club-Book, of course, did not appear until 1834, but it was preceded by other similar volumes such as The Philadelphia Souvenir (1824). The Common-Place Book saw print in 1828.

⁸⁹ American Literary Annuals and Gift Books, p. 3.

⁹⁰ Harry Hayden Clark, "Changing Attitudes in Early American Literary Criticism: 1800-1840," in Floyd Stovall, ed., The Development of American Literary Criticism (Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 1955), pp. 15-73.

a proving (and to some extent a training) ground for writers who were to be America's literati.

The American familiar essay, therefore, found in the era 1815-1835 fertile ground which nurtured the roots of its eighteenth century tradition inherited from the Spectator and Tatler and from eighteenth century American imitators of these; ground which fostered its increase in numbers as the numbers of new periodicals appeared and as these same periodicals conducted an intensive campaign for a national literature; ground which urged it to seek the diversity of form and style that an increasingly powerful and articulate popular press demanded, and through such seeking and resultant experimentation to develop into the artistic piece of writing represented by such selections as Irving's "Family Reliques" and "Horsemanship"⁹¹ or Theodore Sedgwick Fay's "Snorers"⁹² essays which compare favorably with acknowledged and more well known masterpieces of the art of the familiar essayist, "Old China," by Charles Lamb, and "On Going a Journey," by William Hazlitt.

⁹¹ Bracebridge Hall; or, The Humorists (London, 1822), I, 57-65; 165-172.

⁹² The Atlantic Club-Book (New York, 1834), I, 68-74.

CHAPTER III

THE ESSAY OF SOCIAL CRITICISM:

MANNERS AND CUSTOMS MORALLY MANHANDLED

In an attempt to deal concisely with a major movement in American belles-lettres, Rufus W. Griswold in 1847 wound together in one of his typically sonorous pronouncements a truism, an implication, and a generalization: "An era in essay writing was commenced by Steele and Addison, in their periodical papers suggested by the follies of contemporary society. This era closed with the production in America of the *Salmagundi* of Irving and Paulding, the *Old Bachelor* of Wirt and his associates, and the *Lay Preacher* of Dennie."¹ The truism, of course, is the statement that an era in essay writing began with the periodical essays of Steele and Addison--a fact which was already a truism when Franklin was a young man. The implication--that the Addisonian essay continued to be popular in America as well as in England throughout the eighteenth century and into the early years of the nineteenth--has been shown by several modern American literary scholars to be as accurate

¹ The Prose Writers of America (Philadelphia, 1847), p. 38.

as the truism.² The generalization--that "this era closed with the production in America of the *Salmagundi* of Irving and Paulding"--is a statement which is in one sense correct and, because of an important oversight, incorrect. It is broadly correct to say that the era of the Addisonian essay ended in America about the time of the War of 1812 if we consider only the work of such a writer as Irving, whose position in the canon of American belles-lettres is unassailable. For although there were essays of the Addison type written by R. H. Dana, Sr., John Pendleton Kennedy, and even by Irving and Paulding, which appeared for the first time as much as a quarter-century after this date, it must be admitted that the vogue of this type of essay, at least for writers of some literary stature, was already on the wane as the period under discussion in this investigation began.

But the play has two casts of characters, and for the second cast--the throngs of "occasional" writers, the literary amateurs, and the anonymous contributors to the myriad local journals and newspapers--the curtain had not shown any sign of coming down; indeed, as this chapter will demonstrate, the currency of the essay modeled on Addison's and Steele's

² Conway, Chapter IV. Mott, American Magazines, III, passim. Cook, pp. 4-5. Watson, Chapter I. Lewis, "A History and Bibliography of American Magazines, 1800-1810," passim. E. C. Coleman's dissertation on the Addisonian essay is probably the richest source.

periodical pieces did not diminish but in fact burgeoned in the magazines and newspapers throughout this period. And a reading of Frank Mott's History of American Magazines will further indicate that this same essay type persisted in our magazines well into the decade after the Civil War.

Origin, Influences, Style, Structure. Of the types into which the American familiar essay of this period appears to separate itself, none exhibits a more direct line of descent from its origin than does the essay commenting on customs and manners. Indeed, not only are its purpose, subject matter, devices, and techniques clearly modeled upon those found in the Spectator and Tatler papers and certain of their followers, but in many cases wholesale borrowings of titles, phraseology, pseudonymous signatures, and themes for essay sequences reveal even greater dependence. Echoing Spectator 10, and in the same breath quoting Pope, Mordecai Noah insisted that his essays were "intended to 'catch the manners living as they rise,' to correct error and advocate whatever may conduce to morality and happiness."³

³ Gleanings from a Gathered Harvest (New York, 1847), Preface, n.p. Although the date of this volume (and of certain other collections of essays cited in this dissertation) falls outside the announced limits of study, it should be noted that essays contained therein had appeared previously in various periodicals, and that their original publication dates do fall within the years 1815-1835. Reasons for citing a later edition

David Hoffman sternly asserted that although his Viator was a collection of "notions," he felt that it was his duty as well to "elevate the standard of popular literature, and especially of that daily and hourly family reading, which is taken up at such intervals of comparative leisure as are snatched from the more urgent and regular occupations of life. . . ." ⁴ And even a reviewer of Sarah Wentworth Morton's My Mind and Its Thoughts, which contains essays of reflection and self-examination more reminiscent of Montaigne's "My selfe . . . am my booke" than of Addison's social criticism, was apparently carried away by the trend of the times and closed his review by "merely remarking that it is not intended to recommend this work as faultless; but we know not any work which has lately issued from the press, that has a better tendency to improve the heart, the morals, or the manners of the community than the one before us." ⁵

Understandably, these three volumes are representative of collections of essays which, since they did appear

rather than the original sources are two: a collection of essays usually occasioned a revealing "Preface," and is therefore valuable; some of the periodicals in which the original essays appeared are either lost or are difficult to obtain.

⁴ Viator, or A Peep into My Notebook (Baltimore, 1841), p. 13.

⁵ Review is signed, "Amicus." Columbian Centinel (October 2, 1823); cited by Emily Pendleton and Milton Ellis, Philenia: The Life and Works of Sarah Wentworth Morton, 1759-1846 (Orono, Maine, 1931), pp. 100-101.

at last in book form, more or less called for a preface; this preface, like the magazine editor's "Address to the Public" which inevitably saw print in the optimistic first issue of every literary journal and general magazine of the era, offered a not-to-be-missed opportunity for the writer to assure his readers of his twofold purpose of entertainment and instruction. Addison had written "diversion or improvement" in 1711 (S. 1), but he would not have cavilled about the change in terms; the meaning remained the same.

Yet the essay serials and the single essays, rarely dignified by appearance in cloth or leather, were equally voluble in their declarations. "Moral elevation blended with delight" was the motto of, for example, the "Reflector" series in the Masonic Mirror (Boston, 1825), the "Babbler" series in the Rhode Island Literary Repository (Providence, 1814-1815), and the "Le Moulinet" series in the American Athenaeum (New York, 1825). "Women" (Aladdin's Lamp), "Fashions" (Pearl), and "Varieties" (Robinson's Magazine),⁶ if we choose only a trio to represent an enormous chorus, were subjects which lent themselves readily to the same dual purpose, and their authors found opportunity within the essays to make their aims clear to every reader.

It is interesting, in passing, to observe the struggles

⁶ No. 1 (November 1833), pp. 10-14; III (August 31, 1833), 20; I (August 1, 1818), 44-47.

of some writers in their attempts to rehabilitate essays which had meandered, essay-like, from the strait path of moral rectitude. Such a fault called for trowel work and, since many of the wielders were still apprentices, the patching is often shoddy, showing the effects of having been hastily, or as an afterthought, applied. An unknown contributor to the Minerva, for example, hurriedly added this closing paragraph: "Shall I wind up my rambling dissertation with a moral? It shall be so, and that addressed to my fair readers:--Let each of them aim at being beloved rather than admired, to become objects [sic] of attachment rather than awe, and never to sacrifice good nature, urbanity, and benevolent feeling on the shrine of any virtue whatever."⁷ Or consider, since he obviously approved of the pastime, the difficulty the anonymous writer of "Dancing" experienced in defending the suspect activity in the face of well organized opposition: "I am . . . no dancer myself; but the enlivening nature of musick; the beautiful and happy faces which smile around; the good order and regularity; and the free and friendly intercourse which prevail; possesses [sic] charms which I am not cold enough to resist, and renders a public ball to me, one of the most pleasing mental recreations."⁸

⁷ "The Cleanly Shrew," Minerva, III (May 28, 1825), 125-126.

⁸ The Literary Casket, I (March 4, 1826), 9.

And even Lydia Child, one of the most popular writers of the age, felt constrained to pen this defensive paragraph which was printed as an explanatory headnote to the sketch in question: "It may be thought that the following story convey a bad moral: but it is actually true; and since vice and folly are sometimes triumphant in the world, and goodness is sometimes depressed, we should learn to look for reward where alone it is certain to be found; i.e. within our own hearts."⁹

Between the essayists and their appearance in print stood the editor of the local journal, who was also dedicated to the blending of entertainment and moral instruction, usually through the medium of essays which commented on social manners and customs. A favorite couplet, used as a motto for numerous essay serials and essay "columns" echoed Pope:

Prompt to improve and to invite,
We blend instruction with delight.¹⁰

It appeared, among other places, in the Rural Repository (Hudson, New York, 1825), the Rhode Island Literary Repository (Providence, 1815), and The Family Magazine (New York City, 1833). Hartford's The Literary Casket (1826), Baltimore's Robinson's Magazine (1818), and Richmond's Virginia Evangelical and Literary Magazine

⁹ The Coronal (Boston, 1832), p. 148.

¹⁰ Pope's Essays in Criticism, though not the source of this couplet, were frequently quoted from and imitated in the periodicals of the era.

(1818-1828), although they passed up the couplet, announced that readers would find in their pages materials which would not only entertain but also instruct, essays which would "delight the senses and at the same time elevate the moral character," and NONE of the "hasty and crude effusions of conceited young men; odes to butterflies and to ladies' eyebrows, and fooleries of this sort." As the editor of the Boston Lyceum put it: "In the Tales and Essays which may, from time to time, be found in our pages, we expect that cheerfulness will be the predominant cast, though we shall by no means reject productions of a different complexion, when their definite end is the inculcation of virtuous, manly, or patriotic feelings."¹¹ And other magazines issued unmistakable invitations. After the Port Folio had exhausted, for the time being at least, the reprint possibilities of Joseph Dennie's pieces, its editor announced in the "Readers and Correspondents" column that a new writer, of a specific kind, would be welcome: "A Lay Preacher may perhaps be prevailed upon to instruct the town by combining the designs of Addison with the playfulness of Goldsmith, and the good nature of Sir Richard Steele."¹²

In both the essayists' and editors' minds, then, the purpose of the essays--indeed, generally of all the

¹¹ I (January 15, 1827), 2.

¹² Fourth Series, I (February 1816), 172.

writings which were to appear in print--was twofold: to entertain or "delight," and to instruct or "elevate." And the fact that this twofold purpose was commonly accomplished in an essay or sketch which commented on a social foible points clearly to the continuing influence of the Tatler and Spectator on both writer and reader.

In subject matter, the affinity of the American moral essay of this period to the Spectator and Tatler continues to be evident, especially as concerns the "occasional papers, that take their rise from the folly, extravagance, and caprice of the present age," announced by Addison (S. 435) as one of the types of subjects he would use in his periodical essays. As Addison's subjects included the whole range of contemporary life, with emphasis upon interests and customs especially characteristic of London--reproving an extravagant wife (S. 328), women in politics (S. 81), the weaver's wife and the lottery (S. 242), pains and pleasures of married life (S. 254)--so American essayists' subjects in our period show a correspondingly broad range, but, of course, with emphasis upon interests and customs characteristic of New York or Philadelphia or Boston or, simply, things "American."

For example, The Albion in 1828 compared the relative merits of "English and American Women," wrote of the "Fashions" in New York City, and praised the modern age for its development of "Fasionable Visiting" on Sunday

afternoons.¹³ The Literary Casket in 1826 discussed "American Ladies," mused about "Yesterday, To-morrow, and To-day" in America, and estimated the values to an ambitious young American man of "Female Friendship."¹⁴ And the Masonic Mirror of Boston scorned things European in an essay on "Titles," but approved things American in "Love of Country."¹⁵

Yet in spite of this shift of emphasis to things American, it is clear that the periodicals preferred the Addisonian type of the essay to others. The usual editorial policy was to hint broadly at this in such a statement as approving "literary essays, political discussions, poetic effusions, and whatever else may have a tendency to amuse or instruct the reader, or promote the public welfare" for inclusion in the particular magazine.¹⁶ On occasion, the policy was made clear in words of one syllable: "The subjects . . . are, generally . . . Periodical Essays, in the manner of . . . Addison."¹⁷ And as we have seen, new writers were urged to follow the prevailing policy.

¹³ VII (June 28, 1828), 22-23; VII (December 6, 1828), 203; and VII (June 14, 1828), 3-4.

¹⁴ I (April 29, 1826), 44; I (February 18, 1826), 1; and I (March 4, 1826), 10.

¹⁵ I (July 23, 1825), 4; I (September 3, 1825), 2.

¹⁶ The Columbian Observer (Philadelphia and Baltimore), I (June 1, 1822), 65.

¹⁷ The Literary Gazette (Philadelphia), I (December 29, 1821), 829.

In line with this editorial policy are scores of titles to reinforce the assertion that American readers were served up plenty of what Addison had called "papers of morality," that is, essays devoted primarily to a discussion of a general ethical principle or quality, such as modesty, thrift, simplicity, or benevolence.¹⁸ Simple in structure, straightforward in purpose, hortatory in tone, and sermonic in style, these pieces sought to emphasize for readers the untoward effects of moral weakness and the rewards inherent in moral strength. "Pride" is perhaps the most insidious enemy of man, declared an unsigned essay in the Baltimore Minerva, Wreath and Saturday Post, although one by "E. B. L." in the Constellation had earlier claimed that distinction for "Ambition."¹⁹ "True Dignity," "Charity," "Honour and Integrity," and "Heroism and Fidelity" were proposed by their respective writers as qualities worth striving for;²⁰ and an unknown Westerner antedated by more than two decades Thoreau's cry

¹⁸ See, for example, the following essays: "Honesty," "Humility," "Rational Ambition," The Literary Casket, I (June 24, 1826), 78; (August 5, 1826), 97; (September 2, 1826), 114. "Good Nature," Minerva, I n.s. (July 24, 1824), 254. "Loyalty," The Daily Atlas (Boston), October 6, 1834. "Chivalry," American Magazine, I (February 1835), 244. "Magnanimity," New-England Magazine, VII (August 1834), 134-138.

¹⁹ IV (December 10, 1831), 2; II (February 26, 1831), 113.

²⁰ Pearl, III (August 17, 1833), 9; Pearl, III (August 31, 1833), 16; Atkinson's Casket, No. 5 (May 1834), pp. 214-215 [misnumbered 202-203]; The Daily Atlas (Boston), October 10, 1834.

for "Simplicity."²¹

Various literary devices assisted essayists in their crusade for the better moral life. Stories from the Bible, incidents of moral courage from epic literature, anecdotes illustrative of ethical qualities recalled by the writer--these and others are commonplaces in the period. But a favorite device for American essayists, as it had been for their English and American predecessors a century earlier, was the "character," the addition of which to the moral essay helped to drive home the lesson to be learned by giving a horrible or admirable example.

Throughout the eighteenth century, American magazines, and some few newspapers, had used the character in its original pithy form, copied for the most part from English periodicals such as the London Magazine.²² In the later eighteenth century and in the early years of the nineteenth, however, the character began to expand in length from one or two paragraphs to a full page and more; also, the tone and style of the writing moved from the brief, impersonal

²¹ Western Monthly Review, I (July 1827), 129-132.

²² Andrew Bradford's The American Magazine (Philadelphia, 1741) had in its first number a series copied therefrom. See also American Magazine and Historical Chronicle, which between September 1743 and December 1746 inserted several of these; also see William Bradford's American Magazine and Monthly Chronicle, from October 1757 to October 1758. For the last quarter of the eighteenth century see the Pennsylvania Magazine, the Columbian Magazine, the American Museum, and the American Apollo, all of which printed groups of characters, more or less regularly.

cast of the Theophrastan type and the relative heaviness and mannered style of, for example, Joseph Hall's Characters of Virtues and Vices (1608), toward the more fluid, less "framed," and more imaginative style of the modern character sketch. In our period, in turn, the character sketch moved in one direction toward the piece of short fiction, such as Irving's "The Stout Gentleman"; in another direction toward the moral tale, such as Eliza Leslie's "Mrs. Washington Potts" or Catherine Sedgwick's "The Intemperate"; and in still a third direction, toward the familiar essay, particularly the essay here designated as the essay of social criticism, in which the dual purpose of instruction and amusement was conducive to the use of such material. Although the characters continued to be "The Whimsical Man," "The Dandy," "The Intemperate Man," or variations of these, the character in its expanded version moved well within the range of the essay as the writer used the character as a basis for comment upon the foibles of society or criticism of the age.

Usually this type of essay reflected Steele's procedure of embedding a character or two within the essay for illustration, and in so doing, provided an additional range of subjects which fit well with the overall moral tone. The Boston Courier on several occasions devoted half of its second page to a column called "Sketches of Character," which consisted of short essays or, rather, expanded characters, on "Buffalo Citizens," "New York Cockneys," "New York

Belles," "Bostonians," and "The Philadelphia Fair"--to take the titles from one column of a single issue.²³ The Charleston (South Carolina) Courier, on the other hand, preferred to take its characters from southern society: "The Great Talker," "The Enthusiast," "The Blue Stocking."²⁴ The Western Monthly Magazine of Cincinnati noted that "sketching character is the mode,"²⁵ but preferred, as did its brother journal, the Western Monthly Review, to beat the local bushes for "The Kentuckian in New York," "The Western Traveller," and "A Western Lady."²⁶

Eliphalet Nott, erstwhile president of Union College, Schenectady, used the character to good advantage within his essay on "The Gambler,"²⁷ which pointed out to young college men what could happen if they followed the "temptation to easy riches." The anonymous author of "An Interminable Smoker"²⁸ used one character to illustrate the social evils of this "filthy habit" and another to warn of the physical debility which invariably resulted.

²³ I (December 28, 1826), 2.

²⁴ January 18, 1828; February 22, 1828; April 4, 1828.

²⁵ VII (July 1834), 362.

²⁶ "Kentuckian," Western Monthly Review, I (June 1827), 85-88. "Traveller," Western Monthly Magazine, II (September 1834), 486-492. "Lady," Western Monthly Magazine, II (April 1834), 202-204. All essays cited here are unsigned.

²⁷ The Rural Repository, I (September 4, 1824), 53.

²⁸ Constellation, II (January 29, 1831), 84.

Conversely, the unknown composer of "The Auctioneer" found little to cavil about while presenting in a spirit of irrepressible good humor his character of "Peter Puff."²⁹ And Matilda Murray, whose essay won the prize ("Fifty Dollars--or a gold medal suitably engraved and worth an equal amount") for the year, used brief characters to illustrate her points as she discussed both good and evil aspects of "Human Nature."³⁰

Besides serving as subject matter for the American imitators of Steele, the character provided a viable literary device to augment the essayists' limited repertoire of writing techniques. As Steele had conceived Sir Roger de Coverley as a "mouthpiece" through which he could talk, American writers created puppet characters and put into their mouths the required words of moral instruction. "Tom Wilding" spoke for an unknown writer in "A Brief Sketch of 'Character'."³¹ "Collingwood" lectured his audience on "The Excellence of Virtue,"³² and an impossible "Ippolito" had implausible words to say about "Chaste Enthusiasm."³³

As the character expanded, writers began to adopt it

²⁹ Minerva, III n.s. (June 25, 1825), 189-190.

³⁰ Masonic Mirror, I (August 27, 1825), 2.

³¹ Pearl, IV (April 18, 1835), 254.

³² Atkinson's Casket, No. 7 (July 1833), pp. 293-294.

³³ Pearl, IV (March 14, 1835), 217.

as the core of the essay and to construct around it the required moral paragraphs. There is, I think, a clear and important pattern in this development. Early in our period, in general before 1820, the character was commonly used in the essay as has been demonstrated above: rather in the manner of the exemplum in a sermon. And the technique was often closer to the sermon than to the essay, despite the title "essay" usually assigned by the writer. One of "Twig'Em's" essays in the Boston Weekly Magazine and Ladies' Miscellany begins, for example, with some broad generalizations about the despicable character of those "'clothed in a little brief authority' and devoid of feeling and principle."³⁴ To illustrate his point he inserts the character of Mr. Tythingman, who prevents people from walking the street on Sunday during church hours. However, the character is short--three very brief paragraphs--and is clearly used only as an illustrative device. Similar use is made of "The Scholar" in "On Reading to Excess";³⁵ of "Suspicious the Owl" in "Essay on the Screech Owls of Mankind";³⁶ and of "The Country Man" in one of A. B.'s untitled essays.³⁷

³⁴ III (December 26, 1818), 27.

³⁵ Melancthon, Virginia Evangelical and Literary Magazine, I (September 1818), 394-398.

³⁶ Rhode Island Literary Repository, I (July 1814), 180-183.

³⁷ Boston Weekly Magazine and Ladies' Miscellany, III (March 13, 1819), 71.

By the middle 1820's, however, and even more markedly in the 1830's, the character grew to occupy, first, the center of the essay and, eventually, the entire essay, with the inevitable moral paragraphs (now sometimes only sentences) merely tacked on, this technique recalling the efforts of some essayists to make their productions satisfy the moral strictures of the age. Lydia Child's hasty addition to her sketch in The Coronal, mentioned earlier, reflects just such a technique, as does Catherine Sedgwick's "Old Maids," which begins with a single paragraph thus:

I would by no means persuade you or any woman to prefer single life. It is not the "primrose."--Nothing less than a spirit of meekness, of self-renunciation, and of benevolence, can make a woman who has once been first, happy in a subordinate and second best position. And this, under ordinary circumstances, is the highest place of a single woman.--Depend upon it, my dear young friend, it is safer for most of us to secure all the helps to our virtues that attend a favorable position; besides, married life is the destiny Heaven has allotted to us, and therefore best fitted to awaken all our powers, to exercise all our virtues, and call forth all our sympathies. I would persuade you that you may give dignity and interest to single life, that you may be the cause of happiness to others, and of course happy yourself--for when was the fountain dry while the stream continued to flow? If single life, according to the worst view of it, is a moral desert, the faithful, in their passage through it are refreshed with bread from Heaven and water from the rock.³⁸

Miss Sedgwick continues: "I shall conclude with a true

³⁸ Atkinson's Casket, No. 3 (March 1834), pp. 137-139.

story." And she then spends the remaining two pages (roughly thirty paragraphs) developing the characters Agnes and Lizzie Gray, representing the single and the married woman.

The place of the "moral essay with character" in this development pattern is, therefore, an important one: such an essay provides a kind of middle ground between the manners essay and the short story, for as the thick coating of instructional morality began gradually to thin out during this period--as writers began more often to imply and less often to state their didactic purposes--there was increased demand and opportunity for the kind of imaginative composition represented by the short story and a corresponding ebb in the analytic manners essay.

There are, of course, identifiable reasons for this trend, perhaps the most important of which was the growth of a more sensitive and more outspoken body of literary criticism. Even before the beginning of our period, Washington Irving had pointed out that there was a need for perceptive criticism in this country because of the "crude state of native talent" and the immaturity of public taste.³⁹ The more conservative and the more literate periodicals, though they had added their voices to the cry for a national literature, early in the period took a dim view of the capability of native critics to judge American literary productions. In their opinion, American literature

³⁹ Analectic Magazine, I (March 1813), 249.

had to "wait for decision on its merits and demerits, from the higher authorities in London,"⁴⁰ because "men of letters, unhappily, form but a small proportion of [American] society."⁴¹ After 1829, however, though The American Quarterly Review gloomily asserted that we were still dependent upon "improvements from abroad" and probably would continue to be for some time,⁴² there began to appear, as William Charvat has shown,⁴³ a sizeable and vocal American criticism. It no longer praised American writing merely because it was American.⁴⁴ It expressed dissatisfaction with the merely imitative,⁴⁵ and snorted indignantly at the widespread plagiarism which plagued the periodical press.⁴⁶ And it resurrected from oblivion the

⁴⁰ North American Review, I (September 1815), 312-313.

⁴¹ The Portico, II (December 1816), i-iii.

⁴² "Specimens of American Poetry. . . . By Samuel Kettell" (anon. rev.), VI (September 1829), 240-262. See especially p. 262.

⁴³ The Origins of American Critical Thought 1810-1835 (Philadelphia, 1936). See also Harry Hayden Clark's essay, "Changing Attitudes in Early American Literary Criticism: 1800-1840," in Floyd Stovall, ed., The Development of American Literary Criticism (Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 1955), pp. 15-73.

⁴⁴ The Boston Courier, January 10, 1828, contains a scorching review of N. P. Willis's Poems.

⁴⁵ J. J. J., "Writings of Addison and Steele," Western Monthly Magazine, III (April 1835), 232-244. This essay seriously doubts the "help" of Addison's essays as models; it suggests that imitation does nothing but retard the growth of native writers.

⁴⁶ See, for example, the anonymous essay, "Editorial Credulity," Constellation, II (October 1, 1831), 364.

conviction of Stephen Simpson, who had asserted at the time of Ghent that before America could foster a national literature of any value, she had to evince a general desire for sound reading and a discriminating and pure taste.⁴⁷

That this body of criticism had its effect on the reading public is unquestionable. Response to it was immediate and resounding. Letters by the dozens from awakened and now annoyed readers complained about the crudity of the "original pieces" published in one or another issue of their favorite magazine; about the banal contents of this or that month's "Apollo's Corner"; about the blatant plagiarism (they gave chapter and verse as proof) committed by "Zelotes" or "X."⁴⁸ There were letters, too, which deplored the frequency with which pieces written

⁴⁷ The Portico, II (December 1816), 120.

⁴⁸ Boston Weekly Magazine, III (May 1, 1819), 99 (misnumbered 94): "Please to inform 'Octavian' that his pretty verses which appeared in your twenty-second number [III (April 10, 1819), 88 (mis-numbered 61), 'To Emeline'], may be found verbatim in Bennett's Letters to a Young Lady." Boston Weekly Magazine, III (December 19, 1818), 24. A letter to the editor signed G. R. S., pointing out plagiarism by "Orea" [III (December 12, 1818), 20] in poems entitled "Religion" and "On the Effects of Religion." Orea copied almost exactly, says G. R. S., from Burns's Works, p. 190. Constellation (New York City), II (October 1, 1831), 364. An anonymous essay, "Editorial Credulity," indicts the editors of other journals for their sufferance of plagiarists. Philadelphia Monthly Magazine, I (March 1828), 276-279. R. deplores "Imitation Among Writers" and warns of the consequences of plagiarism to American literature.

by several magazinists were reprinted. Here, one such epistle can speak for the group: "I take one monthly publication and two weekly ones. My last number of the monthly, contained a very beautiful little piece entitled The Widow of Nain;--which, however, I had seen and admired before. Next came one of my newspapers; and The Widow of Nain again made its appearance. When the other arrives, I shall open it with a full expectation of seeing again The Widow of Nain." ⁴⁹

Editors responded; they had to. Those who did not carried their periodicals with them into oblivion. A general stiffening of the requirements for having a piece printed became more and more evident after the middle years of our era. "B. W." was informed in the "To Correspondents" column that there was no place in The Family Magazine for "such excruciating puling fustian." ⁵⁰ Many members of the myriad "Cato" and "Astraea" tribe were summarily dismissed by a request for postage to return their manuscripts or

The Western Messenger, I (October 1835), 265-269. Essay similar to the one by R. in the Philadelphia Monthly Magazine; titled "Literary Property," and signed T. W. New-England Magazine, V (October 1833), 327-332. An unsigned (but probably by Joseph T. Buckingham) review of Dana's Poems and Prose Writings has this to say: "He is an original; and this, in an age of imitation, and when there are so many patterns that one can scarcely write without resembling some of them, is saying a great deal."

⁴⁹ Boston Telegraph, February 26, 1824.

⁵⁰ II (April 19, 1834), 256.

have them consigned to the flames. A writer with some promise, whose manuscript needed revision, was now and then asked to call for his essay at the editor's office so that its deficiencies could be more easily discussed and remedied. Moreover, pointed requests for new contributions were made to more experienced penmen whose writings the magazine's readers had found to their liking.

Editors took a lesson from their correspondents and began also to heap obloquy upon the plagiarists. More frequent editorial notes addressed to brother journals requested acknowledgment for pieces reprinted from the original source and threatened reprisals if no satisfaction were forthcoming.⁵¹ The number of books reviewed, and generally, the quality and extent of the review articles, increased; correspondingly, ephemera began slowly to give place to better things, indicated by the fact

⁵¹ Joseph T. Buckingham, "Loose Thoughts on Plagiarism. Humbly Dedicated to the Editor of the Portland Advertiser." New-England Magazine, II (April 1832), 333-336. Buckingham was noteworthy among the opponents of literary mediocrity. In his editorial column he regularly attacked not only plagiarism and the practice of "lifting" articles from other journals but also the "trash" that each morning's mail brought to his desk for possible inclusion in the New-England Magazine. On one occasion, probably after he had surveyed a particularly poor collection of manuscripts sent in by aspiring writers, he wrote: "We claim the credit of adding nothing this month to the national stock of bad poetry." [III (August 1832), 175.] This statement occasioned much acid comment from various magazines and newspapers which assumed (probably correctly) that Buckingham's words were directed their way. Buckingham did not retreat. For a specimen of his replies to his accusers, see his letter to the Boston Daily Atlas [New-England Magazine, III (September 1832), 264].

that before the end of our period such names as William Gilmore Simms, John Greenleaf Whittier, Oliver Wendell Holmes, John Pendleton Kennedy, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Edgar Allan Poe joined those of William Cox, Lydia Child, Catherine Sedgwick, Nathaniel P. Willis, and Irving and Paulding in the pages of American periodicals.

Other techniques used by the American essayists in this period remind one of the Spectator and Tatler. As Addison and Steele had concealed their identities by using pseudonymous signatures, so their American imitators a century later cloaked themselves with such inventions as "The Gossip," "The Enthusiast," the perennial "Old Bachelor," and mere initials usually not their own; now and then, however, the writer's actual initials were used but were scrambled anagrammatically.⁵²

Frank Mott has several times remarked that it was the custom for early nineteenth century American magazine editors to announce that they were being assisted in their endeavors by "a company of gentlemen," again following the practice of periodical editors of eighteenth century England. When in 1709 Steele and Addison began publishing their moral journals, they had represented themselves as

⁵² "The Gossip," American Athenaeum, I (June 9, 1825).
 "The Enthusiast," Charleston Courier, February 1828.
 "Old Bachelor," The Albion, VII (October 1828).
 Lydia Huntley Sigourney often scrambled her initials to read "H. L. S."; Francis Cope reversed his to read "C. F." Examples of initials in regular, reversed, and scrambled order may be found, of course, in any periodical of the era.

a sort of editorial committee composed of men of high social standing: "a gentleman of Worcestershire . . . a baronet, his name Sir Roger de Coverley"; "another bachelor, who is a member of the Inner Temple"; "Sir Andrew Freeport, a merchant of great eminence"; "Captain Sentry, a gentleman of great courage"; "the gallant Will Honeycomb, a gentleman" (S. 2). It is clear that since the Tatler and Spectator stood for social reform, a writer or artist would not have been considered dignified enough or of social rank high enough to have had his moral strictures heeded by readers.⁵³

American essayists and editors of the National Period followed Addison and Steele in the "club of gentlemen" tradition, but with differences which must be noted.

Although at the beginning of our period the social stature of the craft of writing was still doubtful⁵⁴ and in some ways was likely to remain so for some time,⁵⁵ thus encouraging employment of pseudonyms, there were ameliorative forces gathering strength almost daily. First was the cry for a national culture, which not only asked, "Where is our American literature?" but also, "Where are

⁵³ See Schücking, Chapter III, pp. 16-25: "Shifting of the Sociological Position of the Artist."

⁵⁴ No writer had yet succeeded in making literature either a full-time profession or a paying proposition.

⁵⁵ Writers of novels, especially French writers, were to remain bêtes noires until much later in the century, a point which will be dealt with later in this chapter.

our writers?" Second was the international literary reputation won by Washington Irving and Fenimore Cooper early in the 1820's, a reputation which began not only to provide a financial and esthetic return to the two writers but also to hold promise for other American penmen that they might succeed in like manner. Third, and no less important, was the rise of the middle class as a vocal, influential group, causing a shift in the ideal of personality. No longer was the man of society with exquisite manners--the eighteenth century cavalier--to be accorded the place of honor.⁵⁶ To supplant him came three other popular figures: first, the reverend and moral man, and with him a general deepening of the spiritual life, one reflection of which is the great number of moral and religious essays which were printed in the general magazines of the era; second, the man of achievement--the business man or man of success--and with him the turn of attention toward material gain, one influence of which will be seen in the essays on marriage to be discussed later in this chapter; and third, the intellectual man--the artist, the scientist or "natural philosopher"--and with him the elevation of learning to be an important

⁵⁶ In our period a germane illustration is provided by the gradual disappearance from the periodicals of the "dandy" essay. From roughly 1815 to 1823 there were many such; in the 1830's there were practically none. Nor was this disappearance the result of the mere dying out of a fad; irate letters signed by real people in the late 1820's so berated writers who authored and editors who printed the "dandies" that the removal of such pieces from the journals became a matter of bread and butter.

part of existence, the influence of which is discernible in the increased attention given in the magazines to essays on scientific discoveries, on natural history, flora, and fauna, and on books, learning, and esthetics.

Consequently, though the practice of concealment of identity persisted during our period, the causes for it had changed since the days of the Tatler. Furthermore, it is clear that though very few of the total number of magazine and newspaper pieces were signed with actual names, equally few real attempts to preserve anonymity were made. Contributors' names are sometimes revealed in the editors' various columns, sometimes in indexes, sometimes in reviews, and sometimes, though admittedly not as often, in lists of contributors published "for the information of subscribers."

To what, then, may the practice be attributed?⁵⁷ Certainly the fact that it was so widespread for so many years indicates that at least ostensible concealment was "the thing to do." That it was the custom among writers in print probably strongly influenced new contributors to conform and thereby enhance their chances of publication.

⁵⁷ From among the magazine editors of the era comes one specific statement about the problem. Isaac C. Pray, Jr., editor of the Pearl, wrote: "It is rather putting one's self forward, to place the name over an article, designed for the press, before the public has demanded it; it is improper. The public will do this in most cases for an author; and before it is proper or beneficial, oftentimes." [Pearl, III (October 12, 1833), 43.]

There are indications, too, that polemicists found anonymity a convenient cloak, and it is reasonable to suppose that American book reviewers followed the lead of contemporary English reviewers in leaving their estimates unsigned.

That auctorial anonymity titillated readers, moreover, is more than a little evidenced in the era, especially in such an instance as the two-decade-long argument over the identity of the "Author of Waverley" (Scott of course preferred to be known as a landed gentleman rather than as an author) or in the short but nonetheless active squabble about who wrote "The Gray Champion."

Finally, the plagiarists and pirate printers, particularly those who published gift books or annuals of similar description, contributed to the currency of the practice. Most of these publishers simply culled from a variety of sources whatever unsigned prose and verse seemed appropriate. Because of the absence of international copyright protection, British authors bore the heavy burden of much of this thievery; yet in spite of the American copyright law of 1790, even American writers' works were stolen. Sometimes these pilfered essays and poems were reprinted entire; but just as often they were shortened to fit available space, broken into pieces and the parts printed separately with new titles or no titles, or had appropriate portions "selected" to be printed facing one of the many engravings which usually decorated such

annuals.⁵⁸

Whatever the reasons for the concealment of identity, this piracy which was both a cause and a result of its currency needs comment upon here, for if this era of American periodical literature is eventually to receive a label, one appropriate choice would be the "Age of Plagiarism." Although earlier mention of this phenomenon has been made in this study, it seems necessary here to return to the subject briefly because of its relevance to the point in question.

It is not only at this distance in time that the plagiarism is observable. In a review of The Factory Girl, a moralistic pot-boiler of frightening proportions, a contemporary critic complained: "This is an age of imitation. Everything, even names, mottoes, and title pages supply occupation for plagiarism. Every popular author has a train of humble followers, who support themselves by aping his peculiarities, and who have as much of the merit of their original, as a shadow has of the substance of the object producing it."⁵⁹ Another, in the Masonic Mirror a few months later argued: "If one's own nonsense be not better than another man's sense, it is at least more original--no meagre praise in this golden age of plagiarism.

⁵⁸ For a full discussion of this point, see Thompson, Chapter II, "Publishers and Profits," pp. 7-15.

⁵⁹ Minerva, II n.s. (October 16, 1824), 29. Review is signed "C."

If Horace could exclaim against the servile crew of imitators--Heavens! how would he now ejaculate and apostrophize. . . . One book now affords nourishment to fifty, or five hundred magazines or reviews."⁶⁰ And the voluble Isaac Pray, editor of the Pearl, fumed:

Plagiarists are becoming so intolerable that our duty seems no longer to be a matter of question, and therefore, with much respect, we ask the Editor of the Christian Secretary, in this city [Boston], who is, we believe, a merciful and charitable gentleman, to do justice to the Zelotes, who figures so conspicuously in the poet's corner of his paper, and trust that the poet's offerings will be, henceforth, cast away, for they are polluted. Pilferers of poetry or prose are bad enough in any circumstances, but they add brazenness to their badness when they publish their thefts in a print devoted to the interests of religion and the good of society. Pilferers are not expected to write hymns, and their patchwork would rest with far better grace among the Highland Hills, where it was first formed, than in the presence of an enlightened community. It was but a few weeks since, that the person, who has been for a long time rendering himself ridiculous by his crudities in the city papers here, stole the best portions of his articles from 'The Dying Year' of Mr. Whittier, and not being contented with his theft, added to this sin--the more memorable sin of murder.⁶¹

The charge of plagiarism in this era must not be laid at the feet of the writers alone, for some editors were equally culpable. Although, as we have seen, it was common practice for editors, particularly editors of smaller journals with limited subscription lists and few capable

⁶⁰ Anon., "Authors," I (February 5, 1825), 4.

⁶¹ Pearl, IV (August 20, 1834), 11.

contributors, to "select" materials for their columns from the larger, already established periodicals, certain unscrupulous editors raided the pages of the New-York Mirror and the New-England Magazine (clearly two favorite gold mines) with scissors and paste pot, and filled column after column of their own with borrowed materials without giving credit to the source. And although the irate victim of article theft protested volubly, neither righteous indignation nor threat of reprisal proved to be any deterrent, for the practice was, demonstrably, current throughout the period in all sections of the country.

Whatever were the problems concerned, American essayists refused to part with the device which had been so distinctive a feature of the Addison-Steele periodical essay: the club of gentlemen whose actions and associations furnished much of the entertainment of the essays. Actually, by the time our period began, this device, although it had originated in England more than a century ago, had had a long and uninterrupted history in America--a fact often noticed by students of American literature.⁶²

⁶² The earliest twentieth-century survey of American literature, while noting the indebtedness of Salmagundi to the Spectator, mentions earlier American imitations. See Walter C. Bronson, A Short History of American Literature (Boston, 1906), p. 53 ff. H. M. Ellis, whose Joseph Dennie and His Circle is still the standard work on the "Lay Preacher," describes the debt not only of the Dennie essays to the Spectator club but also that of other lesser known series of periodical essays between 1785 and 1800 (p. 51 ff). Elizabeth C. Cook, whose work may well have been the spur for Ellis's, likewise discusses the American versions of the Spectator club in colonial periodicals. Ferdinand

Nor were these clubs merely fictitious ones. Other men had been associated with Joseph Dennie in making the literary department of The Eagle: or Dartmouth Centinel a success.⁶³ Jeremiah Mason⁶⁴ mentions John W. Blake, a lawyer of Brattleboro, Vermont; William Coleman of Greenfield, Massachusetts, a writer for the Greenfield Gazette and later editor of the New York Evening Post; and Royall Tyler of Guilford, Vermont, all men who in 1794 joined forces with Dennie to produce "From the Shop of Colon and Spondee."⁶⁵ Much of the critical force evident in The Portico from 1816 to 1818 was provided by members of the Delphian Club of Baltimore: John Neal, Jared Sparks, Francis Scott Key, Paul Allen, Samuel Woodworth, and others of less repute. In Philadelphia was the Tuesday Club, whose members furnished regular contributions to the

"Künzig's Washington Irving und seine Beziehungen zur englischen Literatur des 18. Jahrhunderts (Heidelberg, 1911, pp. 13-45) discusses at length the Spectator and the Spectator club in America after 1720. And Jay B. Hubbell evaluates the influence of the Spectator on "William Wirt and the Familiar Essay in Virginia," William and Mary Quarterly, 2nd Ser., XXIII (April 1943), 136-152.

⁶³ Hanover, New Hampshire. Began publication July 22, 1793.

⁶⁴ George S. Hillard, ed., Memoir of Jeremiah Mason (Cambridge, Mass., 1873), p. 30.

⁶⁵ See H. M. Ellis's discussion of this point: Joseph Dennie and His Circle, pp. 64-65.

Port Folio; ⁶⁶ while in New York were, among others, Washington Irving's Sketch Club and James Fenimore Cooper's Bread and Cheese Lunch. ⁶⁷ And though the literary leadership of America had, temporarily at least, moved from Boston to New York, Philadelphia, and, to a lesser extent, Baltimore, the Hub of New England had its club of gentlemen to found the North American Review and, later, the new generation of Emerson, Lowell, Holmes, Longfellow, Hawthorne, and others to form its Saturday Club.

Undoubtedly the immediate influence upon American essayists' use of the "club of gentlemen" device was the Salmagundi coterie, whose William Wizard, Anthony Evergreen, and Launcelot Langstaff were so similar to members of the Spectator Club. In the first essay of Salmagundi they had

⁶⁶ The membership of this club was extraordinarily large. The following were among the many members: Charles Brockden Brown, John B. Linn, Charles J. Ingersoll, John E. Stock, Horace Binney, Nathaniel Chapman, Samuel Ewing, Joseph Hopkinson, William Meredith, Richard Rush, Thomas Cadwalader, Thomas I. Wharton, Richard Peters, and Philip Hamilton; later, Nicholas Biddle, Robert Walsh, William B. Wood, Alexander Wilson, James Abercrombie, Thomas Chalkley James, Alexander Graydon, John Sanderson, Charles Caldwell, Francis Cope, John E. Hall.

⁶⁷ In The World of Washington Irving (New York, 1944), pp. 30-31, Van Wyck Brooks notes the existence of other such clubs, and adds: "These clubs 'for improvement in literature' thrived in all the American towns, in Hartford, Boston, Baltimore, Wilmington, Charleston, and the little groups of lawyers and doctors and other professional men discussed and even imitated their chosen authors." Although Mr. Brooks does not mention it, the similarity of these groups to Franklin's Junto (Autobiography, pp. 59-60) and to his "meetings" earlier with Charles Osborne, Joseph Watson, and James Ralph (pp. 36-37) is unmistakable.

made their purpose as clear as the Spectator had: "Our intention is simply to instruct the young, reform the old, correct the town and castigate the age. . . ." ⁶⁸ And the hundreds of American writers of the next generation who read the mildly satirical series of comments on life in the town which the authors had named "Gotham," and the merry tales of high life at "Cockloft Hall," lost no time adding the work of James Kirke Paulding and William and Washington Irving to their copies of the Spectator, the Tatler, and the Citizen of the World as appropriate models for their essays.

Another device for which the essayists of our period were indebted to their eighteenth century English masters was the "letter," usually from an imaginary correspondent, which "argued" with the essayist over a point he had made in a previous writing, or which was predominantly narrative, in the manner of Steele's "Jenny Distaff" and "Orlando" and Addison's story of Mr. Spectator's visit to Sir Roger de Coverley's country place. Typical of the argumentative letter device is the exchange between "Twig'Em" and "T. Titmouse, Esq." in the Boston Weekly Magazine. Twig'Em begins:

Having been in New-York lately, I took a walk down Broadway to observe the fashions, and of all places in the world, New-York caps the climax for dandies. I observed one in

⁶⁸ Salmagundi, I (January 24, 1807).

particular with a little paltry inexpressive, unmanly face diddling along the side walk and followed him a little way out of curiosity merely to twig his motions as the bucks call it. He was dressed in a brown surtout, a pair of blue cossacs, short to the extreme of the fashion and a little jackey dandy hat, so extravagantly fashionable as to excite the laughter of every one that passed him. He bent himself back so far, that when behind him I was fearful every moment that he would bump the back part of his head upon my toes by falling over backwards--and then sir he had such a droll swing with his head; why it went from one side to the other, like unto a pendulum with the motion reversed.--I enquired of a friend who the gentleman was and he told me it was Tom Titmouse, a blade of the town and one of the most useless animals upon the face of the earth.⁶⁹

Tom Titmouse "replies" in the succeeding issue of the magazine:

Mr. Editor,
I was astonished to see a Biographical Portrait of myself in your last paper. I send this letter express, and request you will insert it in your paper, that I may not be quizzed by my friends, and accused of a want of spirit for not noticing the vile caricature that appeared in your last paper, signed "Twig'Em." I would give a trifle, sir, to know who this said "Twig'Em" is for upon me honor, I was never known to lack courage in resenting an affront, and although I may have made myself a little ridiculous by exhibiting my personal attractions in the most fashionable dress of the day, still, sir, "what man dare, I dare." You have undoubtedly heard of me before you ever read the Biographical Portrait which appeared in your last paper, for there is not a boy of ten years old in this city but can call me by name to my

⁶⁹ Boston Weekly Magazine, III (December 5, 1818), 15.

head, if I would suffer such a familiarity. There is only one thing, Mr. Editor, that prevents my being angry with your correspondent for offering the sketch that appeared in your last paper, and that is, that he entitled me an Esquire-- . . .⁷⁰

As might be expected, this "exchange of letters" spurs a month-long series of humorous accusations and rebuttals on the subject of the dandy--a subject, as was noted earlier, which was literally penned to death during our period.⁷¹ Similar exchanges occur between "Ned Megrimms, Jr." and "Angelina,"⁷² between "Peter Plainman" and "Miss Priscilla Prudish,"⁷³ and between "Christian Rugged" and "Arabella Steamboat"--⁷⁴ to mention only three of many examples.

The narrative letter found a regular place in the travel essays, which were commonly "extracted from the correspondence of an American Gentleman in Europe" or which were written from resorts and places of interest in the

⁷⁰ Boston Weekly Magazine, III (December 12, 1818), 18-19.

⁷¹ The leading periodical, it appears, in printing "dandy" essays was the Boston Weekly Magazine, especially in the period 1815-1823. In 1819 the craze was at its height, and several essay serials were devoted to nothing else. See III (February 27, 1819), 63; III (March 6, 1819), 66-67; III (March 20, 1819), 75. Other magazines also furthered the fad, but not so extensively. See Minerva, III n.s. (August 7, 1825), 285-286; The Albion, VII (December 6, 1828), 203; Philadelphia Monthly Magazine, I (March 1828), 279-280.

⁷² Boston Weekly Magazine, III (November 14 and 21, 1818).

⁷³ The Cabinet of Curiosities (New York, 1815), pp. 399-401.

⁷⁴ The Columbian Observer, I (April 6, 1822), 4; (May 11, 1822), 43-44.

United States.⁷⁵ To meet the standards of the times, writers were careful to assert that "These sketches combine much amusement and information,"⁷⁶ or that the reader would benefit in some vague (but assuredly moral) way while he amused himself. One of the most popular of subjects, the travel letters' regular appearance was often noticed by contemporary writers. One, almost despairingly, averred: "I have often been astonished at the multiplicity of modern books of travel. From Jerusalem to Pantin, from the Pole to Pentonville, no matter where a traveller may go, every region, district, kingdom, or country, artificial division, or natural formation of the globe, has had its peripatetic illustrator. . . ."⁷⁷ He did not exaggerate: the number of such essays was astronomical, and they covered every imaginable locale. Some better idea of their currency may be gained from the fact that one essay serial alone contained seventy-one essays on such subjects as

⁷⁵ Precedents for the outside traveler device were many. Irving, echoing Goldsmith, had used it in Salmagundi, as Goldsmith, in turn, had echoed Addison and Steele in his Citizen of the World. In contemporary England, too, the tradition was carried on by Thomas Jonathan Wooler, among others of the Republican periodical publishers of the early nineteenth century, who had borrowed Goldsmith's oriental gentleman for his anti-Thomas Paine magazine, The Black Dwarf.

⁷⁶ Anon., "Foreign Scenes and Travelling Recreations," American Athenaeum, I (July 21, 1825), 105-106.

⁷⁷ Anon., "Modern Travellers," The Atlas, II (December 5, 1829), 89.

"Cadiz in 1823," "The Mountains of Switzerland," and "The Interior of Pekin."⁷⁸ More common were series like "The Itinerant," signed "Proteus,"⁷⁹ and the unsigned "The Traveller,"⁸⁰ each of which contained twelve essays, the usual number for a series.

An interesting sidelight is provided by one kind of travel essay, often published in one or another of the New England periodicals, under such a title as "Letters from the Mid-West to a Down-Easter. By a Buckeye."⁸¹ These ostensibly were written to extol the beauties of the Ohio (or Kentucky or Illinois) countryside, but they also found room for local propaganda. "Letter Second" of this series evaluates literary men of the West, and "Letter Third" points out the advantages that a poet (Otway Curry) enjoys by living amid the pristine loveliness of Nature's Ohio.⁸²

Like most other essays of the period, the travel essays often offered an opportunity for moralizing. At an appropriate point in the narrative, prepared for by the

⁷⁸ This series began in the Minerva, I n.s. (April 10, 1824) and ran until III n.s. (September 3, 1825), appearing weekly.

⁷⁹ American Athenaeum. This series began I (July 21, 1825) and appeared regularly, though not weekly, until I (October 13, 1825).

⁸⁰ The Rural Repository. This series began I (August 21, 1824) and ran regularly, though not weekly, until I (May 14, 1825).

⁸¹ Pearl, IV (December 20, 1834), 121; IV (March 7, 1835), 207; IV (August 22, 1835), 399.

⁸² See also "Letters from Ohio," signed "W," in the New-England Magazine, I (July 1831), 30-34; I (November 1831), 381-384; I (December 1831), 487-491; II (January 1832), 50-54.

earlier insertion of suggestive adjectives ("sublime" or "wondrous"), the essayist could write:

Following the guide that had brought us thus far down the chasm, we passed into the amphitheatre, and, moving under the terrific projection, stood in the centre of this sublime and stupendous work;--the black, ironbound rocks behind us, and the snowy cataract springing between us and the boiling basin, which still lay under our feet. Here the scene was unparalleled. Here seemed to be the theatre for a people to stand in, and behold the prodigious and fearful wonders of the Almighty, and feel their own insignificance. Here admirations and astonishment come unbidden over the soul, and the most obdurate heart feels that there is something to be grateful for. Indeed, the scene from this spot is so sublime and so well calculated to impress the feelings with a sense of the power and grandeur of nature, that, apart from all other considerations, it is worthy of long journeying and extreme to behold it.⁸³

Or in response to the "Americanism" current, the essayist could praise "American Scenery"⁸⁴ in general and every area of the country specifically.⁸⁵ This particular phase

⁸³ Grenville Mellen, "A Scene in the Catskill Mountains," in G. B. Cheever, ed., The American Common-Place Book of Prose (Boston, 1828), p. 459.

⁸⁴ X. Y. Z., Philadelphia Monthly Magazine, II (September 1828), 345-350.

⁸⁵ G. M., "South Carolina" [two essays], New-England Magazine, I (September 1831), 246-250; I (October 1831), 337-341.

Anon., "Picture of Ohio by a Traveller," Atkinson's Casket, No. 3 (March 1833), p. 139.

Anon., "Travels in Arkansas," Western Monthly Magazine, IV (December 1835), 385-388.

David Hoffman, "Visit to Fort Erie," Masonic Mirror, I (March 26, 1825), 4.

of the travel essay, because so widespread for so long, provides additional reinforcement for the thesis argued by Benjamin T. Spencer in his recent study of early nineteenth century American literary nationalism: that the American writer of the National Period made an attempt to "possess" the land, to design a literary strategy which would comprehend his new culture.⁸⁶

Travel essays containing letters which described foreign lands claimed equal attention, however. Here again the range of titles is unbelievably broad, and it is safe to say, as the contemporary essayist quoted earlier said, that no country, no sizeable city, no unique locality, no aberration or magnificence of nature, escaped reference.⁸⁷ Yet one type from among these merits more

Anon., "A Journey 'Down East'," Masonic Mirror, I (June 25, 1825), 4.

Anon., "New-England," Constellation, II (September 3, 1831), 333.

Lydia H. Sigourney, "Harper's Ferry and Its Environs," Boston Lyceum, II (September 15, 1827), 116-127.

Anon., "Washita, Louisiana," American Athenaeum, I (December 22, 1825), 363-364.

Anon., "Saugerties," Aladdin's Lamp, No. 1 (November 1833), pp. 3-4.

Anon., "Delaware Water-Gap," American Magazine, I (September 1834), 33.

Anon., "Great Natural Bridge, Virginia," American Magazine, I (October 1834), 59-60.

There are, of course, scores of others, but the above list should give at least some picture of the range and currency.

⁸⁶ The Quest for Nationality, p. viii.

⁸⁷ See note 77.

than general attention because of its frequent occurrence, its invariable reference to the same idea and thus its inevitable overtone, and its apparent effect upon readers, whose letters to editors of periodicals fairly bristled with extremes of praise or condemnation. For convenience, we can refer to this type as the "exotic" essay.

Although freedom from restraint upon form or method is so essential to the spirit of the essay that it seems idle to describe standard patterns, when the essayist enters a narrow field for his subject it is usually possible to separate and identify unifying characteristics and hence, at least for convenience of study, to propose a workable category. It is just such a narrow area that is circumscribed by the term "exotic," for the essays within this area exhibit only superficial variations. First, as to subject: "The Wonders of Elora"; "Moluccas, or Spice Islands"; "Andalusian Simplicity"; "Weddings in Quito"; "Ashantee Splendour"⁸⁸--all dealing with places or peoples unknown to Americans of the era and hence "exotic" in the romantic tradition. Sometimes more important than the titular subject is the promise of wonders to be experienced by the reader, such promise regularly

⁸⁸ Masonic Mirror, I (June 18, 1825), 2.

Minerva, I n.s. (June 19, 1824), 166.

Minerva, II n.s. (February 5, 1825), 285-286.

The Daily Atlas (Boston), October 24, 1834.

Minerva, II n.s. (October 16, 1824), 24-25. [For "Ashantee Splendour. No. II" see Minerva, II n.s. (October 23, 1824), 38-39.] These anonymous essays are listed in order of mention in the text.

contained in the opening paragraph of each essay. The writer of "The Wonders of Elora," for example, declares: "And if these temples do not excite in the mind emotions of astonishment and delight, I have quite misunderstood my own feelings."⁸⁹ John Griscom, the Quaker professor of natural philosophy whose travel sketches (A Year in Europe 1818-1819 [New York, 1823]) were so highly praised by George Ticknor,⁹⁰ exclaims: "Never in my life have my feelings been so powerfully affected . . . by sensations awfully impressive . . . by the glow of novelty incessantly mingled with astonishment and admiration, as to produce on the whole a feast of delight."⁹¹

Sometimes the title itself contained strong reader appeal in its overtones: "Roman Nights. No. I"; "Females in India"; "Capture of the Venetian Brides."⁹² And on occasion, a more explicit title looks forward to Melville's account in Typee of his romp in the surf with uninhibited Melanesian maidens: "Description of the Cavern of Hoonga in the Tonga Islands, and Interesting Love Adventure of

⁸⁹ See note 88, first entry.

⁹⁰ North American Review, XVIII (January 1824), 178-192.

⁹¹ "Mont Blanc in the Gleam of Sunset," in George B. Cheever, ed., The American Common-Place Book of Prose. . . . (Boston, 1828), p. 344.

⁹² Port Folio, Fourth Series, VIII (August 1819), 125-128. Pearl, III (August 2, 1834), 210-211. Minerva, III n.s. (June 25, 1825), 188-189. These anonymous essays are listed in order of mention in the text.

a Chief."⁹³ Perhaps it is unnecessary to remark that such essays as these were widely--and often--reprinted, even in New England.

Perhaps the most succinct answer to the question, Why was the travel essay so popular in this period? has been given in an early twentieth century "popular" study of our period: "I have shown . . . that the American of 1815 did not travel; that, in fact, he could not; that he did not write many letters, as it took so long to get an answer and the expense of carriage was considerable; that he married a girl of his vicinity because he knew none other; that his schooling, if he got any, he received in his neighborhood; that he derived little information from the newspapers; in short, that his interests and affections were circumscribed by a very small area."⁹⁴ Nor did our period, of course, witness either the beginning or the end of this popular form. Quite the contrary; before 1800, travel essays had dotted the pages of the Pennsylvania Magazine, the American Museum, the American Apollo, and

⁹³ Anon., Boston Weekly Magazine, III (March 20, 1819), 73-74. See also Cabinet of Curiosities (New York, 1833), pp. 183-189.

⁹⁴ Gaillard Hunt, Life in America One Hundred Years Ago (New York and London, 1914), p. 277. Hunt's volume, like others of his (Letters of James Madison), must be used with caution, for it is often unreliable; in this instance, however, although the summation is somewhat overdone, the gist of it may be generally accepted as correct.

the Columbian Magazine,⁹⁵ and the years after 1835 brought to prominence the travel sketches of Nathaniel P. Willis, Longfellow, George Ticknor, and most popular of all, Bayard Taylor.

Although the American essayists had little difficulty appropriating Addison's and Steele's techniques and themes and adapting them to the spirit of the times, their attempts to reproduce the earlier essayists' style and tone produced dismal results. Like the modern advertising-copy writers in their search for newer and better superlatives, the essayists in their eagerness to swim with the age's current of morality succeeded only in drowning themselves in waves of homily and admonition, ponderous sermonizing, and pedestrian Sunday schoolery. An extreme example of this heavy-handedness may be seen in a tirade against drunkenness in "The Moralist" series, a collection of essays which at one time or another must have been reprinted by every magazine on the Eastern Seaboard:

Would you learn how like a serpent drunkenness biteth and how like an adder it stingeth,--then contemplate the disgusting figure and the deplorable circumstances of Silenus.--Behold this miserable wreck of a

⁹⁵ "An Account of the Island of Bali," Pennsylvania Magazine, I (April 1775), 161-163.

"Some Account of the Ruins of Palmyra," Pennsylvania Magazine, I (April 1775), 169-172.

"On the Marriage, Concubinage, and Children of the Turks," Columbian Magazine, I (September 1786), 32-33.

These may be considered representative of the many such essays.

man!--He is not yet turned of forty, yet totters in his steps, like one of fourscore.-- See him weakened in intellect, morose in temper, lost to all sense either of honour or shame, lost in affection towards the wife of his bosom and the children of his own body.--Mark the stupidity of his countenance, and the morose aspect of his blood-shot eyes, his palsied hand, and the leprous tetter that covers his skin. Turn now and behold his wife--there she sits in that corner covered with a thin tattered robe and shivering over a handful of coals.-- See her pale and emaciated--her eyes dim with weeping and her cheeks furrowed with tears--Hapless woman!--who can but pity thee? who can but mingle his tears with thine?96

From the drunken husband to the wife, next to the children, to the parents of the wife, to the social circle in which the family moved, and finally, to society in general this bombast turned, warning that the evils of drink are manifold and that they touch not only the drinker but all who know him. The essayist sternly concluded: "This is not romance: there are many families in our country, whose deplorable situation corresponds with this description."

Of course it is difficult, if not impossible, here to separate the moral essay from the sermon; except that this piece deals with a social problem rather than one of dogma, there is little difference in tone and style, especially since the essayists turned naturally to the techniques and language of the sermon in an effort to make their essays

96 The Rural Repository, I (November 27, 1824), 100-101.

"effective." Yet even the moral essays which were not so baldly didactic exhibit like characteristics. Consider this excerpt from "On the Moral Character of Authors," which presents an idea iterated and reiterated in essays of the period probably because it sums up one attitude of the age toward the writer: "The stars of literature shine unimpaired amidst the revolutions of ages; cities and empires rise and fall around them, yet they still burn unquenched in the horizon of fame, to enlighten and instruct mankind. . . . The voice of genius is heard from the tomb; posterity are as much benefited by the talents of an author as his contemporaries. Hence it is of the last importance, that a writer should be a good as well as a learned and talented man."⁹⁷ Thus far in the essay the tone is moderate; the moral tone is clearly perceptible, but it is an undertone. Yet after having penned the final sentence quoted above, the writer cannot contain himself and succumbs to the urge to moralize: the undertone, in other words, rises to take command, and the essay rapidly degenerates into admonitory finger-wagging:

When an author sits down to write, he should remember that he addresses himself, not to a party nor a nation, nor an age only; but to the united community of human beings, to a world, and even to worlds unborn. . . . He whose specious eloquence covers vice with an attractive veil, dresses absurdity with all the graces of chaste and elegant diction; or who, in the calm tone of philosophy, endeavors

⁹⁷ Minerva, III n.s. (July 9, 1825), 219.

to reason the unwary out of their best hopes and affections, is like the snake who seeks a covert among flowers, that he may more effectually sting the unsuspecting traveller. Such an author's productions are concealed poisons. . . .

The inveighing against novels, freethinkers' treatises, and writings which merely amuse and do not instruct, again cannot be missed here. And when the essayist triumphantly concludes, "If fame be an author's object, surely there are no paths to it so pleasing as those of rectitude," his reader can have no doubt as to what attitude should be taken concerning the legitimacy of the dictum, "Art for art's sake."

The problem of drink received its share of humorous treatment, too, although the style of these essays is no less heavy. Like the serious moral essay, the humorous one resorted to the anecdotal or "character" method of development, but it was rarely more than a single column in length. Typical of this kind is the often told story of the drunken person, sometimes a woman but more often a man, who, having imprudently placed a vase of burning coals near his chair, breathed flammably upon it and became a victim of "spontaneous combustion"--⁹⁸ this probably a borrowing from Charles Brockden Brown's Wieland, in which the elder Wieland, the German mystic, was consumed by "self-combustion" in his temple of meditation. A variant in our period has the

⁹⁸ The Marvellous and Entertaining Repository. (Boston, 1827), I, 48.

victim turn to steam as the result of drinking ice water after having "heated his blood to boiling point" with brandy, and there were several other variants in which, although the inevitable result was "spontaneous combustion," the preliminaries to the harrowing climax were different.⁹⁹

In matters of style, purple was the rule; and purple became the color of the early nineteenth century essay as well as of the poem, the sermon, the oration, and periodical literature in general. However, here the influence must be traced not to Addison of a century earlier but to the floodtide of Della Cruscanism which, amazingly, swept over the American fin de siècle. The phenomenon is the more astonishing because of the rapidity with which it crossed the Atlantic, took hold of American pens, and doggedly persisted until mid-nineteenth century.

Less than three years after Robert Merry had signed his florid poetic effusions "Della Crusca" and had been answered by the equally flamboyant "Amanda," Sarah Wentworth Morton apostrophized the Englishman's verses in her "Lines to Della Crusca." So quickly thereafter as to defy any accurate tracing, the gorgeously adjectived poetic style invaded every periodical in America, so that soon after 1800 it was a commonplace to see in the "Cabinet of

⁹⁹ The American Magazine, I (May 1835), 388. One is reminded, too, of Dickens's Mr. Krook, the bottle-shop keeper in Bleak House.

Apollo,"¹⁰⁰ the "Miscellaneous Selections,"¹⁰¹ or in whatever other name was given to the poetry column in the various journals, a plenitude of inflated verse, lush with italics and superlatives, signed by such as "Ario," "Ianthé," or "Florian."

From the verse to the prose was a short step, and it was taken quickly. In "A Country Night's Reflections," the writer spills over: "What a delightful night! The moon, full orbéd, appears in majestic splendour on the front of yon high eastern hill; the lengthening shadows move along the plain below; the whole creation sleeps. . . . Here let the musing mind awhile indulge reflection;—reflection, awful and instructive as this midnight hour;—the clock strikes twelve—oh time, memento of eternity! how are thy hours squandered away in trifles. . . ." ¹⁰² And in "The Storm":

It is dark, and a silent gloom pervades the face of heaven and earth, that makes my soul expand to such a magnitude, as if it would burst the very bosom which contains it. All is silent! Fear takes possession of my mind; when, from an angry cloud, the liquid flames flash forth with terrible sublimity, darting from heaven to earth, and from earth to heaven, with such repeated swiftness, blazing expansive through the heaven's high vaults, then on a sudden vanishing! On rolls the

¹⁰⁰ Boston Weekly Magazine. Any volume, but see III (1818-1819).

¹⁰¹ The Literary Journal and Weekly Register (Providence, Rhode Island). Any year, but see 1833.

¹⁰² The Cabinet, or A Collection of Choice Things. By a Citizen of New York. (New York, 1815), p. 359.

distant thunder--solemnly sublime, and with the peeling [sic] rain and howling wind, approaches nearer; between each peal out flashes the sulphureous flame, illumining the rushing cataract with its light; succeeded by a crash most horrible, which shakes the very earth to its centre! Once more a sombre gloom spreads over the face of nature--again all is terror and confusion.¹⁰³

Florid, elevated, consciously "literary," and overly elaborate as these passages are, they are nevertheless representative of the attempts made at good writing by many of the magazinists. Paradoxically enough, they were honest attempts made in response to the cry for national culture and to the magazine editors, by and large, who encouraged this overlabored work with inflated prose of their own.

Della Cruscanism in England did not survive the lash of Gifford in Blackwood's Magazine, nor did it have in England during its short life any appreciable vogue. But in America, despite the strenuous objections voiced by W. H. Prescott, George Bancroft, and later, Henry Tuckerman and William A. Jones, the Della Cruscan rodomontade gathered impetus throughout the early years of the century and did not give way until after the vogue of Hawthorne's "damned mob of scribbling women" disappeared in the smoke of the Civil War.

The earliest criticism in our period came, appropriately for this dissertation, from John E. Hall, newly

¹⁰³ The Cabinet, pp. 409-410.

appointed Professor of Rhetoric and Belles-Lettres at the then nine-year-old University of Maryland. In a lengthy and calmly disapproving paper published in the first volume of the Fourth Series of the Port Folio, Professor Hall condemned the style of the times, deplored the cavalier attitude toward learning that such bombast encouraged, and reproached readers for the lack of taste that would permit this excessively ornate prose. He added, brusquely: "'And many daily in setting out books, and ballads, make great show of blossoms and buds; in whom is neither root of learning, nor fruit of wisdom at all.'" If Ascham had lived in our time he could not have more accurately described the rage for the buds of 'Della Crusca' and the blossoms of 'Matilda.' . . ."¹⁰⁴ One of the best essay serialists of the time, the unidentified composer of "The Author's Jewel" series in The Columbian Observer, felt the same way.¹⁰⁵ He excoriated the floral style as "infested with the pestilence of attic wit," having "every extreme of turgid circumlocution . . . [and] practiced without rule or art, elegance or harmony." And this Baltimorean was joined by an equally annoyed Bostonian, who demurred at having to contribute to magazines in company with "self-styled bards, the X's, Y's, and Z's of the daily newspapers . . . [who]

¹⁰⁴ January 1816, pp. 48-59; see especially, pp. 49-50.

¹⁰⁵ A series of five essays: I (June 22, 1822), 90; I (June 29, 1822), 99-101; I (July 13, 1822), 117-118; I (July 20, 1822), 122-124; I (July 27, 1822), 135-136. See especially the third and fourth essays.

for the most part are desirous of sinking the scholar in the man of pleasure. . . ."106

Whatever the number and tone of the critics--they unfortunately were too few though they ranged in tone from the coldly critical to the hotly irate--the effect upon the hordes of occasional writers must have been small, for the inflated prose style, as has been said, dominated the periodicals until past mid-century.

Among the essay models borrowed from Addison¹⁰⁷ by the American writers, one form--the "vision" essay--seemed particularly susceptible to the overwritten style. Addison himself had resurrected an ancient form of literature to construct his "vision" or "dream" essay, partially in response to a popular demand for allegory.¹⁰⁸ Americans found the form eminently usable for several reasons: it was simple, easy to follow, and effective; it permitted, as for Addison, furtherance of moral teachings; it was susceptible to the unconscionable literary "larding" which ran rampant in the era.

The structure was simple. Ordinarily the piece began with the essayist reading a book, preferably by a classical author, or thinking about an idea before retiring, or

¹⁰⁶ Anon., "An Hour in Cornhill," Boston Lyceum, II (July 15, 1827), 24-29.

¹⁰⁷ Watson, Magazine Serials, p. 11.

¹⁰⁸ Bryan and Crane, English Familiar Essay, p. xxxiii.

merely daydreaming. The vision ensued automatically, although it was occasionally helped along by various devices such as a camera obscura, a stained glass window, or "sultriest fulgurations, flickering. . . ." Finally, as Melvin Watson has noted, the vision was sometimes assisted by personifications of virtues and vices.¹⁰⁹ With this uncomplicated framework as a start, the essayist had merely to fill in the details. For instance, the pseudonymous "Walter Witless" who wrote the "Le Moulinet" series for the American Athenaeum in 1825¹¹⁰ used the "reading a classic" opening. In numbers I, II, and III of the series the authors are, respectively, Euclid, Xenophon, and Seneca, and in each case the reading is followed by a paragraph of reflection or musing which in turn engenders the vision.¹¹¹ "The Babblers" series ten years earlier used "The Fourth Book of the Aeneid, or The Mishaps of Queen Dido" as a contrivance to begin its fourth essay,¹¹² while "B's" essays, "My Books," used Livy's Five Books, Cicero's De Officiis, and Paley's Natural Theology.¹¹³

¹⁰⁹ Watson, p. 12.

¹¹⁰ A series of eleven essays which began in I (May 12, 1825), 29-30, and ended in I (August 4, 1825), 122-123. See especially the fourth essay (June 2, 1825) for comparison with the Addisonian vision essay.

¹¹¹ I (May 26, 1825), 44-45.

¹¹² Rhode Island Literary Repository. Series began in I (September 1814), 318-320; see especially the fourth essay [I (January 1815), 533-543].

¹¹³ New-England Magazine, IV (February 1833), 114-121; IV (May 1833), 391-397; IV (June 1833), 454-463.

The "idea before retiring" device was equally common. Five anonymous essays entitled "Leaves Torn Out of a Scrap Book" helped readers of the New-England Magazine in 1832 with vision essays which also counseled moral use of the imagination: "The advice given to young persons is generally limited to the points of improvement of time, the formation of industrious habits, the government of the passions, and the cultivation of the moral, social, and intellectual nature. Sufficient stress is not laid, it seems to me, on the duty of having our tastes under subjection, as well as our passions. The imagination is all-powerful in youth, and if we have not the ability to curb and guide it, it becomes a most dangerous foe, both to virtue and to happiness. . . .¹¹⁴ The essay goes on to counsel moderation in all things, including by implication writing style, an adjuration which was in general superfluous if directed at the editors or contributors of the New-England Magazine. It might better have been aimed at the writer of "A Sad Reflection" who, beset by the usual floridity, gushed:

The keen wind of the mountain shakes
the tattered garment of the care-worn
traveller as he bends before the storm;
but the pelting of the tempest impedes not
his course. Hope animates his mind; his
home is present to his view; domestic af-
fection cheers his heart, and the expected
smile of welcome gives vigor to his limbs.

¹¹⁴ The series began in II (May 1832), 414-416. See especially essay IV, IV (January 1833), 59-61.

In fancy he beholds the cheerful blaze on his cottage hearth, and his steps quicken, but the whirlwind arises, and the forest oak trembles to its root. The blue lightning darts across the blackened horizon, and the shrieks of dismay are heard from afar. He reaches the threshold of his clay built cot; all within is silent as the grave--for there the partner of his cares lies a stiffened corpse. The gloom of despair shivers at his heart; he sinks on the earth and rises no more.

Thus the mind meets adversity, buffets its keen strokes, and becomes vigorous by exertion; till one piercing shaft drives hope from the breast, and the heart sinks oppressed at the saddened prospect; but sorrow will have an end and the grave is the refuge of despair.¹¹⁵

The daydream had hundreds of devotees. "There are moments," began "A." in the Philadelphia Monthly Magazine, "which I suppose every man accustomed to reflection enjoys, of abstraction from all that is earthly around us."¹¹⁶ Other essayists used "Day Dream" as the title and needed no further device or preliminary paragraph,¹¹⁷ while still others altered the phrase to "Beautiful Reflection," "Prophetic Vision," or some similar invention.

The devices used to spur the vision were so numerous and varied that they defeat attempts at sampling. An idea of the range can be suggested by citing some of the broad categories. The graveyard and things associated with its

¹¹⁵ Anon., "A Sad Reflection," The Rural Repository, I (October 2, 1824), 70.

¹¹⁶ "The Prospective Epitaph," I (December 1827), 115-117.

¹¹⁷ Anon., "The Day Dream," American Athenaeum, I (September 22, 1825), 207-208.

moody majesty were perennial choices; so too were miscellaneous "natural beauties": dew drops, rain drops, snow crystals, brooks, streams, trees, mountains. Diaries, scrap books, pressed leaves in old books, school books, and love letters more often occasioned titles such as "Reminiscences" or "In My Memory," but difference in title neither altered the basic structure of the vision essay nor helped it escape the inevitable inflated language. The onus of over-citation must be risked for this opening paragraph with its unbelievable overtones: "I am sitting here in my little study, all alone. And suppose I play with my own fancy awhile? Yes, my closet shall be a Camera Obscura at once. I close the shutters, and exclude the light from my window--not entirely however; but I just leave a little opening, in which I place the glass of philosophy, to amuse myself with the show. . . ."118

Lastly, the literary larding--the essayists' habit of loading their pages with literary allusions and quotations--needs brief mention, for the practice was persistent and pervasive during the era. Nor do we have to search far to find explanations for this ostentatious literary display. Prefaces written for collections of essays leave no doubt as to the reasons certain writers had in mind. David Hoffman, for example, whose Viator was discussed earlier in these pages, felt that although his essays were

118 Anon., "A Camera Obscura," Virginia Evangelical and Literary Magazine (Richmond), II (April 1819), 162-163.

primarily "entertaining" it was his duty as well to "elevate the standard of popular literature, and especially of that daily and hourly family reading." One of his methods becomes clear when he proceeds to tick off fifty-four authors, from Aristotle to Dickens, within his twenty-eight page "Address to My Readers";¹¹⁹ and these giants of literature are spoken of in so reverent a tone that the reader can have no doubt that he is in the presence of greatness. Silas Holbrook found room for mention of Swift, Bunyan, Hume, and Shakespeare in his eleven-page "Letter from a Boston Merchant. No. I,"¹²⁰ while "Y. S. R.," in an essay tailored for just such a practice, mentioned Sappho, Alcaeus, five of the Muses, Maria Edgeworth, Felicia Hemans, Madame de Staël, Hannah More, Elizabeth Smith, Mrs. Barbauld, Madame D'Arblay, Anne Radcliffe, Paine, Hume, Voltaire, Horace, and Virgil, and ends the predominantly feminine list with a reminder of the "genius of Moore."¹²¹ Most of these mentions, it should be added, are accompanied either by a brief quotation from the work of the named author or by a mellifluous comment on his "sublime and useful productions."

"Y. S. R." is as humble as David Hoffman in the presence of literary might, but Holbrook prefers to use his citations in a bolder way, tossing in quotations by the

¹¹⁹ Viator (Baltimore, 1841), p. 13.

¹²⁰ Sketches by a Traveller (Boston, 1830), p. 105.

¹²¹ "Female Education," Atkinson's Casket, No. 7 (July 1833), pp. 291-293.

paragraph and even irreverently forcing the borrowing into an incongruous sentence: "When we had rounded Cape Cod, and fairly entered the 'Mare Magnum,' we were dying of nothing to do---sometimes, however, we would murder a poor porpoise as he glanced around the bows, and 'incarnadine' the seas with his innocent blood."¹²² The practice of abundant citation worked the other way too. In addition to "elevating the public taste" the essayist was able this way clearly to demonstrate his literary competence by having at his command for immediate use the accumulated wisdom of the ages. It is of course certain that he kept on his desk the 1815 equivalents of the Oxford Dictionary of Quotations and the Oxford Companion(s)—The Metrical Miscellany (London, 1802; various American editions between 1806 and 1838) and John Lemprière's Classical Dictionary (London, 1792), both of which were favorite mines for contemporary magazine editors, if we may judge by the number of excerpts from these which appeared in the periodical columns.¹²³

¹²² Holbrook, p. 105.

¹²³ There were other vade mecums as well. Henry Headley's Select Beauties, 2 vols. (London, 1787; several times reprinted in England and in America); The Poetical Register, 8 vols. (London, 1805-1809); The Muse's Mirrour, 2 vols. (London, 1778); and various other "Flowers of Literature" volumes were quarried for selections of poetry, in addition to the individual works of Byron, Scott, Wordsworth, Shakespeare, Milton, Tom Moore, and others. For prose, writers and editors seemed to favor The Lounger's Common-place Book, 4 vols. (London, 1805-1807) and Anecdotes of Polite Literature, 5 vols. (London, 1764), in addition to the works of the individual essayists, Addison, Steele, Goldsmith, and Johnson, and The British Essayists, discussed

One other reason for the continual overquotation was the defensive position of American writers with regard to international opinion not only of American literature but also of the men who produced it. An American who read, for example, Captain Thomas Hamilton's contemporary estimate of the American periodical editor--"The conductors of these journals are generally shrewd but uneducated men"--¹²⁴ had to be convinced that the Englishman was wrong; an effective way to do this, one may surmise, was by the surface show of literary knowledge just described.

Favorite Themes for Essays. Although groups of essays dealing with practically every phase of life and society have come to light in the process of this investigation, it is clear that certain themes were favorites with both writers and readers. As we have seen, the subject of travel was one such theme; another, the American scene. But these and all other subjects were easily surpassed by the theme of relations between men and women, especially the theme of love, courtship, and marriage, which received more frequent and varied treatment than any other in the general magazines

earlier in these pages. There is no room, nor need, here to list the various biographical, evangelical, hagiological, and historical encyclopaediae to which the writers and editors turned for additional material. Investigation of the periodicals reveals that although a great number of these were used, no one volume or group of volumes is worth singling out as a favorite.

¹²⁴ Men and Manners in America, II, 74.

of this era. Nor is this fact surprising; once again, the Spectator and Tatler provided one part of the tradition, and eighteenth century American followers of Addison and Steele the other.

The English coffee-house clientele who purchased the Tatler had frequent opportunities to read about the problems of love. Isaac Bickerstaff's description of the "handsomest style in which to address Women" (T. 30), his "Account of the Offers that have been made me, [and] my Manner of rejecting 'em" (T. 33), and his tale of the muddy marriage (T. 7) are only three examples of the large number of such discussions. Later eighteenth century American Bickerstaffs likewise found the general subject a rewarding one. The third number of the New-England Weekly Journal (April 10, 1727), for example, contains the first of a series of essays which dealt primarily with colonial society and social practice, including marriage. Isaiah Thomas wrote in 1810 that the Weekly Rehearsal, the fifth newspaper established in Boston, had contained such essays each week for the first six months of its existence.¹²⁵ Even in the fiery year of 1775, the Pennsylvania Magazine printed the famous series of "Old Bachelor" essays, several of which concerned relations between the sexes; and a year earlier, Isaiah Thomas's Royal American Magazine had had a "department" called "The Directory of Love" which contained

¹²⁵ History of Printing in America, II, 228.

"letters" about amatory problems. In the 1780's Mathew Carey's American Museum gave space in its first issue to "A Married Man," "The Lamentation of an Old Bachelor," and "On the Happiness of Domestic Life"--these competing with Francis Hopkinson's famous "White-Washing" for the post-Revolutionary War reader's attention.

The essayists of our period, therefore, were provided with the same background for this subject as they were for others: a background which had arisen in the original Tatler and Spectator periodicals and had been developed and acculturated in eighteenth century American magazines and newspapers beginning in the 1720's.

It is perhaps superfluous to search for reasons why the subject was a popular one. Nothing could provide a more fruitful theme for the familiar essayist because of its personal appeal to all classes of adult readers. By its very nature it lent itself readily to the essayist's techniques: the employment of a character; the use of anecdotal material; the employment of "letters," with "answers" in agreement or refutation; the use of a dream or vision, which could be expanded to allegory. No subject, finally, could be more universally attractive and entertaining, for it was a subject on which every reader could consider himself an expert.

Notwithstanding the diversity of titles affixed to the essays on love, there were, broadly speaking, three approaches to the subject: the satirical (and the somewhat

more rare merely humorous), the practical, and the idealistic. As would be expected when one deals with the essay form, none of these approaches may be absolutely limited; in some cases an idealistic essay turned now and then to practicalities, a satire paused occasionally in its sharpness to insert a dash of idealism, and the more serious practical approach could not avoid a sly dig or here and there a wisp of romanticism. By and large, however, the treatments are separable, the more so because of the tone of writing used in each approach.

In its search for targets satire overlooked no phase of the general subject. The bachelor, the old maid, the younger spinster, the starry-eyed maiden, and the love-sick lad provided marks, as did the broader aspects of matrimony, courtship, and romance. Among the first group the bachelor received the most persistent scolding. The unsigned "The Miseries of a Bachelor" declared:

Marriage is emphatically and justly called "an honourable state"; but in what tongue, nation, kindred, or country is the same appellation bestowed upon celibacy? Neither in sacred or profane writings; not in the whole cyclopaediae of science; not in the range of literature, not in the precepts of philosophy, not in the laws of wise and politic nations, is there found a single expression indicative of respect, happiness, content, love, or joy in the bachelor's life. Nor did ever a wise, prudent, or learned nation encourage that idleness and instability peculiar to a single life.¹²⁶

¹²⁶ The Albion, VII (October 25, 1828), 153.

Furthermore, the author of this essay "knew once a bevy a bachelors who formed themselves into a society, and in a few years turned out [to be] a miserable set of drunkards." And after several paragraphs more of pointed criticism the essayist summed up the character of the bachelor as

sad, comfortless, and lonely; rejected, neglected, and despised; deserted by the women, unrespected by the men, cheated by his landlady, imposed upon by every tradesman he employs, despised by his servants, and entombed in his house, if he keep one; friendless, cheerless, helpless, and forlorn: he appears like a garden without a shrub, flower, or plant to adorn it; like a house without a window; a trunk without a branch, or a branch without a leaf: he stands in the wilderness of life, not as a cooling spring with fruitful banks, but as a barren, parched rock around whose head the winds of the desert rush in howling blasts.

Ignoring the egregious misinformation in the piece, it is clear from the above passages that the satire had purpose and direction, and the magazines of the era are full of such essays that might be quoted in support of the point.¹²⁷ Celibacy is contrary to all natural, spiritual, and social laws, and for his transgression the bachelor receives unremitting punishment. He is not a member of "an honourable state" and is therefore ostracized by

¹²⁷ See, for example, the following anonymous essays: "Recollections of a Bachelor: Always Intending to Marry," Constellation, II (September 10, 1831), 340. "The Bachelor," Constellation, II (January 15, 1831), 70. "A Bachelor's Dissipation," Boston Lyceum, I (March 15, 1827), 120-125. "Bachelors' Folly," The Essayist, I (January 1833), 310-313.

society. Because he is "idle and unstable" he deserves to be fair game for the butcher with a heavy thumb, for the shady pitchman, for light-fingered help, or for the account-padding landlady. Nature has decreed that man ought not to live alone, and since the bachelor has chosen to disregard nature's dictum he is doomed to be "rejected, neglected, and despised." He cannot morally fulfill the male's function as sire: "he stands in the wilderness of life . . . as a barren, parched rock. . . ." A home, a wife, and a family provide the proper influences to keep a man on the right road; the bachelor has none of these and in spite of friends, acquaintances, and membership in social groups he may well turn out to be one of a "miserable set of drunkards." Conclusion: it is man's natural, moral, social, and spiritual obligation to marry.

Not all the bachelor essays were satires, of course. Following the lead of the unidentified author¹²⁸ of the earlier "Old Bachelor" essays in the Pennsylvania Magazine of 1775, numerous "old bachelors" of our period wrote humorously self-critical essays assigning jocose reasons for their single state.¹²⁹ Others used the signature

¹²⁸ Of the various names suggested--John Witherspoon, Francis Hopkinson, Crèvecoeur, Franklin--Hopkinson is most often mentioned and seems to modern scholars the most reasonable choice.

¹²⁹ Anon., "Half an Hour Too Late," Minerva, I n.s. (August 21, 1824), 317-318.
 Anon., "Why I Am a Bachelor," Boston Literary Magazine, I (July 1832), 129-131.
 Anon., "Old Bachelors," Constellation, II (January 1, 1831), 51.

merely as the signature to an essay which commented on society in general rather than the specific realm of bachelorhood.¹³⁰ And others, whimsically claiming a degree of objectivity impossible for married people, wrote tongue-in-cheek advice for "regulating the behavior of married folks."¹³¹ In short, neither titles nor signatures indicate the direction and intent of these essays; consequently, the tone and style must provide the criteria for selection--a not unexpected situation in any discussion involving the most flexible form of belles-lettres. Yet one thing is clear. Of the various kinds of bachelor essays, the satire appears in greater numbers than others, and with only minor variations in tone and direction.

But courtship and marriage also had their difficulties, and the humorists had a field day with the aspiring suitor. "I cannot," wrote an essayist in mock despair, "for my own part, divine how poor lovers, get through with all the difficulties they have to encounter in their

¹³⁰ Anon., "Comfort to Bachelors in Warm Weather," Constellation, II (July 9, 1831), 268.

Anon., "Extract from the Diary of a Bachelor," Constellation, II (September 24, 1831), 353.

¹³¹ "Family Jars," Minerva, III n.s. (July 2, 1825), 205-206: "Mr. Editor,-- I am an old Bachelor, and for more than ten years past my time has been chiefly occupied in planning schemes for regulating the behavior of married folks, in such a way as to deprive wedlock of all its inconveniences, and reduce to a system the art of being happy in the married state."

A Bachelor, [untitled essay], The Rural Repository, I (April 2, 1825), 172-173.

progress to the hearts of the fair. The Hesperian fruit is so guarded--so many Hydra-headed monsters start up in the way, that it appears to me they must have nerves of iron, and invincible courage to persevere in their undertakings."¹³² He proceeds to enumerate these difficulties: the suitor's visit may not be well timed; the girl's father is too "cermoniously civil"; sister titters annoyingly at strategic moments; brother is quizzical; aunt is too sagacious; grandmother moreso; and grandfather is formidable: "Then there is the rival (odious name), with whom you may despair or disdain to enter into competition; on whom the sunny smile of the contested fair falls radiant; lights his face in triumph, while you are doomed to the averted aspect or the uninterrogating monosyllabic conversation." "Misunderstandings from maiden delicacy" on the one hand, and the "thousand doubts and uncertainties . . . which . . . keep the heart in a sad state of agitation and embarrassment" on the other, serve further to deter the young man from pursuing his suit. Why should a lad, then, risk such an ordeal simply to procure a wife? It is nonsense, happily concludes the writer.

Other humorists took the view that the reason most bachelors remained single was that they were driven to it by women. To begin with, women are such silly, emotional creatures; and young women are worse than ever: "Young

¹³² "Courtship," American Athenaeum, I (June 16, 1825), 68-69. Reprinted in The Literary Casket, I (January 6, 1827), 189.

women are full of tears. They will weep as bitterly for the loss of a new dress as for the loss of an old lover. They will weep for anything or nothing."¹³³ They are, moreover, "too often beguiled by folly to follow the example of the butterfly, and believe that their principal business is to flutter, shine, find a mate, and then--give place to the other lovely insects of a day!"¹³⁴ Not only is this regrettable trait universal among women, but their preoccupation with such dalliance has had a lamentable effect upon men: "There has evidently been a struggle, although a silent one, for some years past, on the part of that genus of the human species called the dandy, to vie with the ladies in the important article of fashion, and even to surpass them in their devotion to the caprices of the fickle goddess."¹³⁵

It is worth suggesting that a strong reason for much of the satire directed at the bachelor was the increasing number of feminine readers in America and the resultant gradual turn of many periodicals in their direction. There were, of course, magazines which catered specifically to women. The first of these to be founded in our period was the Boston Weekly Magazine and Ladies' Miscellany, which published its first issue in 1815. In the 1820's

¹³³ The Albion, VII (June 21, 1828), 12.

¹³⁴ "The Female Sex," The Literary Casket, I (September 16, 1826), 123.

¹³⁵ "Fashions," The Albion, VII (December 6, 1828), 203.

appeared, among others, John Chapman's weekly Ladies' Miscellany of Salem, Massachusetts,¹³⁶ and Sarah Josepha Hale's monthly The Ladies' Magazine, in Boston.¹³⁷ The year 1830 saw the appearance of the great lady of all such periodicals, the ubiquitous Godey's, which directed tastes in fashions and literature for women (and some men) for years thereafter. Yet many of the general magazines which were not ostensibly (by title or design) aimed primarily at a female audience began more and more to turn their attention to things feminine. For example, the weekly Constellation of New York City, which devoted only about a fifth of the contents of its first volume¹³⁸ to articles and columns for women, gave in its second volume¹³⁹ a third of its space to these. The Family Magazine, also a New York City publication, which indicated breadth of focus by its subtitle, "Weekly Abstract of General Knowledge," belied its words by directing fully half of its contents, volume by volume, to what was clearly a female audience. So too with The Literary Casket of Hartford, Connecticut, whose subtitle, "Devoted to Literature, the Arts, and Sciences," might more accurately have read,

¹³⁶ Date of first issue was November 7, 1828.

¹³⁷ Date of first issue was January 1828. In 1837, it merged with Godey's, with Mrs. Hale assuming editorial control of the new venture.

¹³⁸ Beginning November 21, 1829.

¹³⁹ Ending November 12, 1831.

"Devoted to Women, Marriage, and Fashions." So too with The Rural Repository of Hudson, New York, The Portland (Maine) Transcript, The Rose of the Valley (Cincinnati), and The Microcosm (New Haven).¹⁴⁰

Some magazines resisted the trend, but even in these it is possible to see some evidence of a turn toward the feminine reader. Isaac Pray, Jr., editor of the Pearl and Literary Gazette (Hartford and Boston), gave space within two years for forty-seven poems by Lydia Huntley Sigourney, Letitia Landon, Felicia Hemans, and other less well-known poetesses; five sketches by Sigourney and four by an unidentified "C. Louisa"; and twenty-seven articles directed toward women particularly. Even the conservative and literary-minded Joseph T. Buckingham allowed ten such articles as "Ladies' Fairs," "Female Education," and "Dress"¹⁴¹ within one year, as did the equally conservative James Hall, editor of the Western Monthly Magazine.¹⁴²

By the same token it is clear why fewer satires

¹⁴⁰ The Transcript and The Rose did not begin publication until 1837 and 1839, but it is significant that their contents are even more strongly feminine than any other periodical listed here, except The Microcosm.

¹⁴¹ New-England Magazine, V (July 1833), 54-59; III (October 1832), 278-284; II (June 1832), 452-453.

¹⁴² "The Destiny of Woman. By a Lady," II (March 1834), 135-140.

"The Duty of Women. By a Western Lady," II (April 1834), 202-204.

"Frankness. By a Lady," II (May 1834), 263-266.

"Flowers. By a Lady," II (August 1834), 435-438.

There are others, of course.

pointed at the old maid saw print, compared to the number directed at the bachelor. Moreover, satirists of the bachelor were usually answered banteringly or good-humoredly, but the few writers who were unwise enough to choose the unfortunate old maid as a subject for lampoon were immediately and sternly replied to. In one such case an indignant defender struck back with a "logical" argument phrased in icy language:

With all due deference to wiser heads, we cannot believe that the state of "single blessedness" is the best subject in the world for ridicule.--If it indeed be a blessed state, it will hardly admit of the said ridicule, if it be an unfortunate one, it shows neither good sense, nor good feeling, to ridicule it.--Ridicule is an exceedingly good remedy for the follies, but a very bad one for the misfortunes of mankind. As it respects "Old Maids," that man must be a very churl, an unchivalrous, ungallant, unjust, shallow sort of a fellow, who undertakes to satirize them as a class.¹⁴³

More often, however, the answer came in the form of the practical essay on marriage in which the material advantages of matrimony to both men and women were enumerated.

Here again it is necessary to refer to the flexible line of division between the familiar and the non-familiar essay; for it must be admitted that in these practical essays on a social theme this line is at an elastic point.

¹⁴³ Anon., "Old Maids," The Literary Casket, I (May 27, 1826), 61.

Nevertheless, the factor of personality continues to provide a criterion for selection, as does the tone of the writing. The marriage-manual type of prose belongs outside the realm of the familiar essay and is therefore not dealt with here. But the essay on marriage which emphasizes practical considerations usually retains a basically familiar flavor, a sufficient amount of the author's individuality, and measure enough of the intimate style peculiar to this genre to justify its inclusion. Further, as was suggested earlier, such an essay rarely deals in practicality alone. A liberal quantity of sentimentalism and romance, and good-natured and even benign fatherly advice generally relieves what might otherwise be pontifical. Even the omnipresent, and in this case, indispensable, moralizing blends in these essays with an air which is a mixture of genuine concern, gentle humor, and touching wistfulness to produce an overall tone which would be foreign to any but the familiar essay.

Women found their champions among the practical essay writers. "Nothing," decisively announced a writer in The Literary Casket, "can surpass the appearance of the American ladies."¹⁴⁴ They are unmatched for their tenderness, declared an essayist in the Minerva,¹⁴⁵ warmly supported by another in the Masonic Mirror, who added:

¹⁴⁴ I (April 29, 1826), 44.

¹⁴⁵ Anon., "Female Tenderness," III n.s. (May 14, 1825), 93-94.

"Perhaps there is no country in the world, where the women are more completely domestic, than they are in our own."¹⁴⁶ To avoid any misinterpretation he continued, firmly, "and none where female influence is more generally felt. This is a most happy circumstance." Moreover, when John Neal in his usual contradictory vein could hint, wick-
edly, that English women are better for wives but not for playfellows,¹⁴⁷ he was taken to task by Thomas Shreve, who named American women the true "Sources of Happiness,"¹⁴⁸ and by Thomas Clements, who could scarcely contain either his admiration for ladies or his scorn for any who found fault with them.¹⁴⁹

The practical essay counseled prudence and intelligent planning of the marriage step and emphasized that the selection of a life partner be made intellectually as well as emotionally. "Marriage to be respectable or safe, must be the marriage of the head as well as of the heart, of the understanding and judgment as well as of the mysterious sympathies and secret longings of our nature."¹⁵⁰ It warned that matrimony based only on the "secret longings

¹⁴⁶ Anon., "American Ladies," I (June 4, 1825), 4.

¹⁴⁷ "English and American Women," The Albion, VII (June 28, 1828), 22-23.

¹⁴⁸ The Western Messenger, I (November 1835), 323-326.

¹⁴⁹ "An Article. No. 2," Pearl, IV (June 27, 1835), 336.

¹⁵⁰ Anon., "Courtship," The Atlas, II (September 19, 1829), 1.

of our nature" was bound to turn out unsatisfactorily¹⁵¹ and that the old saw, "Marry in haste, repent at leisure," was as true as it ever was.¹⁵² The taste of the age for morality, so pointedly clear in the excessively moral and spiritual tone of other essays of social criticism is again revealed in the opening phrase of the passage above. Marriage of the heart alone, that is, marriage entered into because of sexual attraction, is not respectable and therefore not desirable on either moral or social grounds. Young women were cautioned, too, not to allow mere physical attractions to carry undue weight in their acceptance of a suitor's hand, but rather to look for "a young man of modest, respectful, retiring manners, with unpretending, yet noble independence of mind, of amiable and pious disposition, not given to pride or vanity,--such a one will make a good husband, for he will be the same to his wife after marriage that he was before. When you see a young man that would take a wife for the value of herself--for her heart, and not for the dazzle of wealth; that man will make a good husband. . . ."¹⁵³ And young men were advised to seek a girl of noble character and industrious mind rather than one of high station or mere external beauty.

¹⁵¹ Anon., "Matrimony," Constellation, II (August 27, 1831), 321.

¹⁵² Anon., "Marriage," The Daily Atlas, November 18, 1834.

¹⁵³ Anon., "How To Choose a Husband," The Portland Transcript, I (June 3, 1837), 59.

A German lass, for example, would prove a fine choice, counseled a writer in the Boston Courier, because of "a trait of character highly to the credit of the female part of our German population; their inflexible adherence to their husbands."¹⁵⁴ It was permissible, however, for a youth to look for a girl with a fine figure in addition to the other desired qualities, for as an essayist in The Literary Casket opined, "There seems to be some congeniality between a fine form and a virtuous mind."¹⁵⁵

Economic advantages were often specifically mentioned and always implied. Essays found in the "Ladies Department" of The Literary Casket, later in Godey's Lady's Book, and, indeed, in practically every magazine and newspaper intended for general, family, or feminine perusal, took pains to point out the necessity for domestic training for women so that they could be exemplary housewives. A deft hand with the needle, a sharp eye in the market, and, where applicable, a firm control of the downstairs force, were wifely assets which kept the family budget in the black. An efficient housewife was indispensable to her husband's business progress, too, since entertainment of important clients and business associates was likely to produce sought-for results when done in the environs of

¹⁵⁴ April 13, 1826.

¹⁵⁵ Anon., "Mind and Manners," I (November 25, 1826), 161.

a well run and attractive home.¹⁵⁶

Side by side with essays such as these were numerous pleas for better intellectual education for women. Of interest to this study is the fact that these hortatory pieces sought support from men by using as a primary thesis the argument that an educated wife was worth hard cash to a husband in the business world.

Other essays in the "Ladies Column" concerned themselves with the problems of a woman's chances for successful marriage. In general such pieces agreed that a girl could marry as early as her sixteenth year and that the ideal age was between eighteen and twenty. Until she turns twenty-five her chances are still reasonably good, but after that age her chances decline so precipitously that at thirty years, if she is still unmarried, she must usually resign herself to the single life. Women readers were often referred to the statistics gathered in England by one "Dr. Granville, a physician and accoucheur of very extensive practice," who had queried nearly a thousand women in a survey to discover what the incidence of marriage was at different age levels. His figures were printed by The Albion in 1828, and they have been

¹⁵⁶ See, for example, the following essays:
 Anon., "Education for the Married Life," The Microcosm, I (July 1835), 156-157.
 Anon., "Man and Wife," Masonic Mirror, I (May 14, 1825), 4.
 P. B. Whitmore, "A Home Essential to Happiness," The Microcosm, I (March 1835), 91-92.

reproduced below.¹⁵⁷ The same table, adjusted "for the sake of greater perspicuity" to deal with exactly one thousand women, was reprinted in an essay in The Atlas in 1830.

There is little doubt that these figures were originally intended to be taken seriously. The tone of The Albion's essay is serious throughout as it urges women to heed the obvious. But when the pseudonymous "Ephraim Blenkinsop" reprinted the figures in his Atlas essay, the bitter truth is assuaged with a bit of badinage. Blenkinsop concluded: "It is clear that a young lady may trifle a little in the early part of the forenoon, but if she lets the warm and genial hours of the day slip unimproved, the sorrows of old maidship may settle on her irretrievably." More specifically, he pointed out,

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<u>NUMBER MARRIED</u>	<u>AT AGE</u>	<u>NUMBER MARRIED</u>	<u>AT AGE</u>
3	13	28	27
11	14	22	28
16	15	17	29
43	16	9	30
45	17	7	31
76	18	5	32
115	19	7	33
118	20	5	34
86	21	2	35
85	22	0	36
59	23	2	37
53	24	0	38
36	25	1	39
24	26		

The Albion, VII (September 20, 1828), 120.

one half of a woman's chances of marriage are gone when she has completed her 20th year. And mind you what the consequence is--she must then as the seamen say, carry less sail, and shoot at a lower mark. At 23, she ought to be very reasonable, for three-fourths of the golden opportunities are gone, never to return. At 26, you will see at a glance that sauciness is out of the question, for your hopes, if the case be yours, will then be shrunk to the small fraction of an eighth. . . . At 31, despair should begin to wrinkle your brow, for when that age comes and finds you single, pray remember, that if you have in the circle of your acquaintances forty marrying men (a rare contingency) you have just one chance among them all. When you stand on the dread verge of 36, it is quite killing to reflect, that of the one thousand chances with which you started, three, a miserable remnant of three, only remain!¹⁵⁸

Fortunately, all straws were not withdrawn from the grasp of the unmarried woman on the threshold of her fortieth year. Unburdened by the mixed metaphors of Ephraim Blenkinsop, the editor of The Albion had added this comment under the original printing of the table: "From this curious statistical table, our fair readers may form a pretty accurate judgment of the chances which they have of entering into the holy state of matrimony, and of enjoying the sweets (we say nothing of the bitters) of wedded love. They ought always, however, to remember, that such of them as, independently of personal charms, possess the more powerful recommendation of property, will be deemed

¹⁵⁸ "Chances of Marriage," The Atlas, II (April 3, 1830), 225-226.

eligible as wives whatever may be their age."

Idyllic pictures were the forte of the idealistic essay, the most popular being that of the highly sentimentalized "happy family circle," a theme which was to see such widespread use in the teary novels and dramas of the 1840's and '50's. Titles such as "Matrimonial Felicity," "The Happy Family," and "Wedded Bliss" dot the columns of the magazine indexes and call attention to the fact that no other life situation can provide so satisfying a career for a woman as that of loving wife and mother.¹⁵⁹ Men are urged to reflect upon the great rewards that family life will bring: comfort, warmth, love and affection, standing in the community, children to carry on the family name and the family business. Above all, the spiritual and moral rewards of respectable family living are emphasized, with the implication that men and women fulfill the destiny ordained for them by their Creator when they marry and beget children.

The family circle theme fit well with the tenor of the age's "light literature" of all kinds. It was, besides being a preferred subject among essayists, a

¹⁵⁹ See, for example, the following anonymous essays: "Marriage," Masonic Mirror, I (February 12, 1825), 4. "Nuptial Rejoicings," Pearl, III (January 18, 1834), 98-99. "Confidence the Secret of Domestic Happiness," The Microcosm, I (February 1835), 73-75. "The Blessings of Life," The Rural Repository, I (August 21, 1824), 45. "The Value of a Good Mother," The Microcosm, I (June 1835), 143-144.

favorite theme among the women sketch writers. For example, Catherine Sedgwick's "The Sabbath in New England" appeared in numerous gift books and annuals, as did Eliza Leslie's "Mrs. Washington Potts"; Miss Sedgwick's "moral tales," moreover, were selected by Mary Russell Mitford for her three-volume Stories of American Life. By American Writers (London, 1830), which volumes, in Miss Mitford's words, were to give English readers a "completer picture of the habits of living, and the ways of thinking" in America and thus to "remedy this deficiency" of knowledge about America and American writers among the English.¹⁶⁰

Both essays and sketches (tales) carried identical overtones, if not in the title then certainly within the text. The anonymous essay "Saturday Evening," for example, begins: "It is proper, often to call ourselves to a solemn account for the time past of our lives; but particularly so at the close of days, months, and years. And at the close of the week, when our toils are all done, and [we] may perhaps be seated at the door, or by the fireside, with our families around us, and the prattling babes about our knees, and the thousand little nameless comforts that cluster together in our imaginations, when we hear of Saturday Night at home. . . ."¹⁶¹ Within this brief paragraph, too, can be seen the other stock devices by which

¹⁶⁰ I, iii-v.

¹⁶¹ The Literary Casket, I (May 27, 1826), 57.

the essayists drew their designedly warmth-provoking portraits. Like the contrivance used by the vision essayists to engender the daydream, the fireside was perhaps the most regularly used scene-center because of its myriad connotations of warmth, friendliness, peacefulness, restfulness, comfort, and safety. Most of all it represented the center of the family, the gathering place for the husband who has earned his comfort through toil to protect and provide, for the wife who has earned hers through the sacrifices of motherhood, and for the children who are at once the cause and the result of this moral idyl. Other settings used were the dinner table, the porch or door or verandah, the mother's day room or sewing room (father not allowed in such a picture), the father's study or library (mother not in evidence), or the parlor (when the minister came to call, usually on Sunday afternoon).¹⁶²

The less specific but nonetheless effective term "home" provided a point of departure for whole series of these idealistic essays with, generally, more emphasis upon the moral obligations necessarily to be shouldered by the several members of the family group. Other essays allegorically compared the home to heaven by pointing out that,

¹⁶² As engravings became more and more popular, especially in gift books and annuals, such essays and tales were often illustrated by sentimental cuts. Godey's, Atkinson's Casket, The Family Magazine, and the Constellation seem to contain more of such prints than any others of the periodicals investigated in the course of this study.

as in heaven, home is a place of friendship, security, confidence, peace, happiness, and warm associations. However, continued one of these, "Heaven is the Christian's home. Here [i.e., on earth], he is a stranger, and a sojourner; but [via this earthly home] he is travelling to a city which hath [real] foundations, the [true] abode of friendship and peace."¹⁶³

There were, of course, idealistic essays which dealt with young love. Essays centering on "Conjugal Affection,"¹⁶⁴ although they did not ignore moral obligations, rarely emphasized these, and chose instead to highlight the man-woman relationship with unmistakable sexual though quite proper overtones. Youth was as important to these writers as it is today to the Hollywood scenarist or the Madison Avenue display advertiser. Husbands-to-be were reminded that, "From the age of eighteen to twenty is the 'very witching time' of female life. During that period, the female heart is more susceptible of the soft and tender influences of love than at any other. . . ."¹⁶⁵ Often,

¹⁶³ Untitled essay, Atkinson's Casket, No. 5 (May 1833), p. 231. I have tried to indicate the entire sense of this rather lengthy sermonistic piece by summarizing whole paragraphs within the brackets of this quote.

¹⁶⁴ Among many with this title, see Masonic Mirror, I (January 29, 1825), 4; Minerva, II n.s. (February 12, 1825), 301-302; Minerva, III n.s. (July 16, 1825), 236-237.

¹⁶⁵ The Albion, VII (September 20, 1828), 120. See also the following unsigned essays for similar accent on youth: "First Love," Masonic Mirror, I (January 22, 1825), 4. "Early Love," American Athenaeum, I (February 2, 1826), 471-472. "Love at One Glance," Pearl, IV (July 11, 1835), 353-354. "Objects of Love," The Essayist, I (July 1832), 218-221.

too, these essays are decorated with appropriate engravings, such as the frontispiece of Atkinson's Casket in 1833. This is a Grecian scene. In the background are four Corinthian pillars backed by lush vegetation. In the foreground center is a young couple standing close together, with the youth's right arm protectively and affectionately around the girl's waist and his left arm pointing questioningly toward a very small (for two) marble bench in the extreme right foreground. While the girl undecidedly eyes the bench, the youth aims a plaintively amorous gaze toward the girl's left ear. The lad is dressed in a loose-fitting jerkin, gathered at the belt, and reaching to just above the knee. His well-muscled legs are shod with calf-length sandals. He is eminently masculine, young, handsome, properly aggressive. The girl's dress is filmy white, falling in soft folds almost to the ankle; it is caught off the shoulder with small clips that allow it to billow bewitchingly in a gentle breeze that also lightly ruffles her long dark curls as they trail gracefully down the back of her neck to below shoulder level. Her hair is bound in a white fillet which frames her clearly patrician features. She is unquestionably feminine, young, demurely nubile.

If the description seems over rich, it nevertheless fits well with the essay, "The First Bliss of Matrimony," which follows later. In it the unknown writer effervesces: "Give me . . . a dear good angel by my side, the thrilling

touch of whose sweetly folding arm may flush my spirits into rapture, and inspire a devotion suited to the place; that best devotion, gratitude and love!" The flush of youth in love suffuses the entire essay, and only in the gentlest way is obligation brought in. "Yes, the sweetest drop in the cup of life . . . an affectionate wife! that generous creature, who for your sake, has left father and mother--looks to you alone for happiness--wishes in your society . . . to draw her latest breath--and fondly thinks the slumber of the grave will be sweeter when lying by your side!"¹⁶⁶

Fewer, but even in small numbers significant in this age of emphasis upon morality, are the essays which hint at or openly discuss illicit love. As would be expected, these are invariably written in the "right spirit," so to speak--written in a way that recalls the use of an evil "character" within a moral essay to provide a horrible example, and written so as to leave no question of the writer's indignation that such a condition of life can exist. In these, too, the purple style is the rule, and the metaphors are simple. The heinous seducer is the snake, his helpless victim the bird: "Yet I do blush while I confess it, instead of remembering our duty towards the lovely sex, man, who was designed by Heaven as their friend, is become their seducer; and the fairer the flower, the more eager are they to blast

¹⁶⁶ Atkinson's Casket, No. 6 (June 1833), p. 278.

it--like the scaly snake who tries to draw to its devouring jaws the harmless bird that thoughtless hops from spray to spray; he twines about, shews all his gilded scales, basks in the sun, rears up his crested head, and courts the little songster to his snare."¹⁶⁷

Even in this proper age, however, it is not altogether strange to find some essays like these. Charles Brockden Brown had boldly used seduction, suicide, and family murder in his novels more than a quarter-century earlier, and Richard Penn Smith's melodramas of the 1820's, The Deformed, or Woman's Trial and The Disowned, or The Prodigals, were strong stuff indeed. Less than a decade after 1835, moreover, the most floridly sensational of the gore-and-seduction novelists was to publish his The Quaker City, a book so filled with sensuality that a scheduled dramatization of it had to be cancelled at the last minute by request of the mayor of Philadelphia, who feared that a threatened riot by the townspeople might materialize.¹⁶⁸ And the above essay passage is an apt enough description of George Lippard's villainous Devil-bug to fit perfectly into that gory novel.

It must not be thought that the essay of social criticism limited itself to the themes discussed in this chapter;

¹⁶⁷ Anon., "Woman," The Philadelphia Visiter, I (June 1835), 29.

¹⁶⁸ George Lippard, The Quaker City; or, The Monks of Monk-Hall (Philadelphia, 1844).

these, clearly, were the major themes in our period and as such deserved examination. But as Dr. Ernest Coleman and Professor Guy Cardwell discovered when they wrote their respective dissertations on different phases and periods of the American essay which followed the Spectator, the form was so widely used, so unbelievably encompassing in subject, and so limitlessly popular in American periodicals before 1840, that to cover even one phase of it thoroughly required strict circumscription of the era to be studied, inevitable limiting of the choice of periodicals to be used as sources, and thoughtful selection of themes to be examined.

The essay of the period 1815-1835 reflected these identical conditions and therefore required similar limitations. This chapter has not, for example, dealt at any length with other themes--food and dining habits, various human foibles, occupations, fashion--which were in evidence in the period; for although these themes were in regular use, as testified to by sizeable groups of essays on each of them,¹⁶⁹ none of them were so popular (as measured by sheer numbers) as the subjects examined in the

¹⁶⁹ The following essays may be considered representative of large numbers in each category. All are unsigned unless otherwise indicated.

Food and dining habits

Anglicanus, "Good Wine and High Prices," The Albion, VII (March 21, 1829), 328.

"Apple Dumplings," The Cabinet. . . . (New York, 1815), pp. 405-406.

"The Eating Philosopher," New-England Magazine, VI (February 1834), 130-133.

foregoing pages. Moreover, little would be gained from more searching inquiry into the varied themes: because the form and style were common property, a change of theme commonly reveals only a change of title, at best a secondary consideration in the essay.

There is, however, a significant difference between the essay of social criticism in our period and the same essay in an earlier period. At the end of the 1830's the type shows clear signs of wear, indicating, as premised earlier in these pages, its imminent decline and eventual

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- Tabitha Teapot, "Taste in Tea," Constellation, II (March 12, 1831), 132.
 "Plain Eating," Pearl, IV (May 2, 1835), 274-275.
- Human foibles
 Anastasio, "Ennui," Minerva, I n.s. (July 10, 1824), 221-222.
 Sigma, "Quackery," Constellation, II (March 19, 1831), 137.
 "Dyspepsia," Family Magazine, I (September 28, 1833), 287-288.
 "Tricks of Trade," Boston Courier, April 27, 1826.
 "Credulity," Minerva, II n.s. (January 22, 1825), 253-254.
- Occupations
 "Lawyers and Merchants," Masonic Mirror, I (September 17, 1825), 4.
 "Shopkeepers versus Pedlars," Constellation, II (May 21, 1831), 212.
 "Runaway Apprentices," Constellation, II (August 27, 1831), 324.
 "Actors and Actresses," Minerva, III n.s. (May 21, 1825), 109-110.
 J. J. J., "Orators," Western Monthly Magazine, IV (August 1835), 67-84.
- Fashion
 "Cosmetics," The Atlas, II (May 8, 1830), 272.
 "Ladies' Stays and Tight Shoes," The Daily Atlas, December 17, 1834.
 "Fashion," Atkinson's Casket, No. 6 (June 1833), p. 262.
 "Fashion," The Microcosm, I (June 1835), 136-137.
 J. G. A., "Fashion," Boston Literary Magazine, I (November 1832), 335-340.

disappearance. No such signs had occurred before the War of 1812. Even during our period the signs are occasional rather than pervasive. Yet it is safe to conclude that the last stronghold of the form was the general magazine of the pre-Civil War years. More specifically, as the time of Sumter approached, the manners and customs essay retreated even further to the pages of the more obscure local journals with meagre subscription lists, where it was to disappear unnoticed while Americans were listening to a new voice speaking in "American" about reluctant jumping frogs and blasphemous bluejays.

It is clear, therefore, that the appearance of Salmagundi had not, as Rufus Griswold asserted in mid-nineteenth century, marked the end of an era in essay writing. Rather it marked what might be better termed a shift of ownership, for as the material in this chapter demonstrates, the American familiar essay which took for its model those written a century earlier by Addison and Steele became in the era 1815-1835 almost the exclusive property of the little known periodical writers and was for the most part ignored by the better literary craftsmen. In the hands of the magazinists the form appeared in great numbers and even burgeoned as new magazines and newspapers, also in great numbers, were founded and sought printable material for their daily, weekly, and monthly issues.

What the Spectator and Tatler essays had done the American imitations of the National Period tried to do:

ethical teaching and commentary on the life of the day; or as Steele put it in the "Dedication" to the 1710 collected edition of the Tatler, "to expose the false Arts of Life, to pull off the Disguises of Cunning, Vanity, and Affectation, and recommend a general Simplicity in our Dress, our Discourse, and our Behaviour."¹⁷⁰ The Americans also had another purpose, often stated and always implied: to demonstrate to themselves, to their countrymen, and to the world that America had produced and was producing an active, articulate, and worthwhile literature, despite statements to the contrary by Sidney Smith, Captain Thomas Hamilton, Frances Trollope, and the reviewers in Blackwood's and the Edinburgh.

In endeavoring to achieve their goals the Americans borrowed unconscionably from their predecessors not only part of the goal itself but also the methods of achievement. Addisonian subject, idea, and theme were baldly appropriated, as were, much less successfully, style and tone. Yet in spite of this license, and perhaps because of it, satisfactory appraisal of these essays is difficult. Popularly, they did succeed: that the general reader of the era liked what he read in the general magazine seems uncontestable. Artistically, they failed. Imitative in device, unimaginative in theme and subject, barren of idea,

¹⁷⁰ The Lucubrations of Isaac Bickerstaff Esq.; Revised and Corrected by the Author. (London, 1710), I, v.

and pretentiously overwritten, the essays of this type looked earnestly toward the mountain but found themselves incapable of scaling it.

Nevertheless there is value here which cannot be so shortly dismissed. As Franklin had early practiced writing prose by imitating the Spectator, so a score of good American writers a century later learned their trade in the Addisonian classroom. The popularity of the social comment essay, moreover, clearly helped to increase the number of readers in America and hence the number of periodical and book buyers. Further, by the last years of the period, as critical awareness grew in writer, editor, critic, and reader, it is apparent that a new polish had begun to glisten on the work even of the amateur or "occasional" writer, with the result that there began to be less reliance upon imitation and correspondingly more upon originality.

Finally, and perhaps most important: as the Spectator and Tatler essays continue to provide valuable material for the student of the Queen Anne era in England, so the essays of social comment which appeared in the American periodicals in the era 1815-1835 supply for the student of this age a similar wealth of information relative to the social, literary, and cultural tastes of the times. As such, despite their generally subliterary level, they contain significance which must not be underestimated and cannot be ignored.

CHAPTER IV

THE NATURE ESSAY:

THE PERSONAL APPROACH TO MORALITY

Like the militant moral essay that sought to imitate Addisonian comment on foibles of the age, the American personal essay of the post-1815 era had its unmistakable trademarks and patterns--and for many of the same reasons. Although the personal essay attracted on the whole better literary craftsmen to its practice, and although many more of these authors were paid for their work than of those who scribbled the essays on dandies and gambling and intemperance, the currents of feeling peculiar to the era were not selective. The desire for an American literature, the predilection for ethical commentary, the rush toward print, the westward movement, the response to myriad technical, social, political, and esthetic advances--in short, all of the forces which are discernible in the essays discussed in Chapter Three--are equally discernible in the personal essays under scrutiny in this chapter. The adherence of writers to favorite themes, and to approaches, devices, phrasings, and frameworks, is as evident too. And the sources for these essays are the same as for the others.

The central difference--and it is both central and

paramount--is in the tone and style of these writings and to a lesser degree in their subject matter. Even when the devices and contrivances are the same ones that were used by the more objective essayists, and used in the same way, differences in attitude and style and approach are clear. In broad terms, the key is subjectivity. Where those who strove to follow the Spectator in keeping an eye on the public's behavior were inevitably and consciously objective, and sometimes unconscionably didactic, those who learned from the Sketch Book and the Essays of Elia as studiously practiced subjectivity. Where the objectivist stood impersonally aside to view the satisfactory and unsatisfactory predilections of his era or his group, the personal essayist conversationally retold his memorable experience or intimately confessed his melancholy. Where the moral shepherd firmly led his flock to fold and made them know the gate was latched, the personal essayist left his staff at home and as often lost himself on a mountain path or in a furniture shop. Though, as will be seen, the subjective essayist frequently digressed long enough to deplore the effects of the onrushing technology or of human conflict, and though his opinions were as forthright and as sharply voiced, like Irving, he rarely allowed such digressions to occupy the center of his essay or to divert him seriously from his essentially intimate tone and approach.

In the first nature essay of any length to appear in

the New-York Mirror, William Cullen Bryant counseled readers:

To those who love, with a commendable enthusiasm, the sublimities of hill, and vale, and wood--embosomed stream and green waves glistening beneath the glorious morn,--to all who can be satisfied with simplicity of manners--with benevolence springing warmly from the heart--with politeness not inspired by the cold cautious etiquette of mere fashion--to all those who would, for a while, exchange the inevitable cares and wrinkles of business, for the joys and smiles of innocent and instructive pleasure--I would say, with all the sincerity of which I am capable . . . hie you away to the beautiful Lake George.¹

Nature has the "enticing charms" to "allure [man] from the dust, bustle, and pleasures of the city, to tread the fields as they lie burdened with the sweets of her flowers; to meditate in the gloom of the thick embosomed wood," similarly intoned another essayist in the Columbian Observer; "picture unalloyed bliss in some sequestered cottage, where passion shall never cloy; discord never enter, and want and woe be forever banished from its threshold."² Or come with me, invited an unknown Rhode Islander: "Let us fly from these artificial beings, to the children of nature and the heart. Suffer me to reconduct you to the simple, yet ever-blooming paths, from which these world-warped tribes

¹ "Lake George," I (December 20, 1823), 164-165.

² "Spring," I (April 20, 1822), 19-20.

have too long led us astray."³

Knickerbockers, Marylanders, Rhode Islanders, Down-Easters, Virginians, and South Carolinians--the readers of the era had only to open any issue of their favorite general magazine to find an essay dealing with some aspect of nature.⁴ One of the most often used themes of the period, it captured the pen of virtually every writer under such a title as "Spring," "Dream of the Wilderness," or "Afternoon in the Woodlands." Literally thousands of these essays were written: hardly any general magazine published an issue without one or more. There are, for example, nineteen in the Hartford (Connecticut) Literary Casket of 1826, and twenty-seven in the New York City Atlas of 1829. Newspapers published them too: the Boston Courier printed twenty-two during 1826, and the Charleston Courier thirteen between January 1 and April 28, 1828.

The number of nature essays, then, and the regularity with which they appeared in print, are indications of their popularity with readers, for it seems unlikely that reader-conscious editors like Sarah Josepha Hale of the Ladies' Magazine and later of Godey's Lady's Book, John H. Rice of

³ "A Cottage Scene," Rhode Island Literary Repository, I (April 1814), 40-46.

⁴ In addition to those cited in the text see "Life in the Country," Portland Transcript, I (June 24, 1837), 84; "An Excursion into the Country," The Virginia Evangelical and Literary Magazine, I (November 1818), 503-516, 537-551; "Shade Trees," Charleston Courier, April 9, 1828.

The Virginia Evangelical and Literary Magazine, and Thomas C. Clarke of the Philadelphia Album would have allotted so many columns to material which was not sought after by subscribers.

That there should be this widespread interest in "nature" after 1815 is also understandable. Nature was ubiquitous, and the subject "nature" was pliable. It fit, or by the merest extension it could be made to fit, every current of emphasis that attracted essayists. For those fervid disciples of nationalism the incontestable beauty of the American natural scene provided a reassuringly secure stronghold from which to defy foreign detractors of things American. England had no rivers to match the Monongahela for its pristine beauty, the Schuylkill for its majestic meandering, or the Hudson for its rugged charm. Rocky New England seacoasts shamed even those of Cornwall, and neither England nor Scotland possessed a Chesapeake or a Delaware Bay so worthy of literary immortality. No proud and silent yet awesome aborigines lurked in British woods, nor could British deer, which according to Irving tamely "trooped in silent herds," fire the imagination as could the American breed. To offer for comparison the Alleghenies or the Appalachians, the newly explored Great Lakes, the unbelievable Mississippi, or the Shenandoah, Susquehanna, or Tennessee Valleys was almost to take unfair advantage. "I am of opinion," asserted Henry Megarey a year after the appearance of the last number of

the Sketch Book, "that we have no occasion to go abroad (like Washington Irving) to find subjects for literary sketching. Good Heavens! If a man can travel, as I have done, from one extremity of the United States to the other . . . without picking up a sufficient stock of ingredients for many a literary olio, I will set him down either for a very superficial observer, or a most incorrigible dunce."⁵

For those who preferred to cling to the puritanical dualism of amusement and edification, nature had as much favor as a subject as did criticism of manners and customs. Even though entertainment of readers was the primary aim of the familiar essay, moral teaching could be surreptitiously inserted in a paean to a mighty oak or in a hymn to Katahdin. Not so ostentatious as to turn the essay into a sermon, nor so sternly announced as to mark it as the product of one of those "barely respectable scribes [which] abound now-a-day as thickly as Dogberry's whortleberries";⁶ but still pointed enough to call attention to the fact that the essay had "value" for the reader that transcended mere amusement.

If one were a utilitarian, he could find agreeable ideas in the nature essays. Continuing the tradition

⁵ The Wanderer (New York, 1821), p. 10.

⁶ William A. Jones, Characters and Criticisms (New York, 1857), I, 179-180.

earlier practiced by John Bartram and his fellow natural scientists of eighteenth-century America, and by even earlier observers of natural resources--John Smith, George Alsop, William Byrd--nature writers of the 1820's continued to catalogue the flora and fauna of western Pennsylvania, New York, Ohio, and Virginia, sometimes with emphasis upon the values to be derived from certain woods or furs or herbs, and sometimes upon the mere existence of various animals and plants. For them the Hudson suggested economic as well as esthetic values; it did no harm to admire the Catskills from the deck of a boat loaded with merchandise to be sold at a profit to Albany tradesmen. The deep beauty of the Vermont Woods was enhanced by the reality of a rich sugar harvest, just as the invigorating air of Pennsylvania was after 1859 to be more appreciated when tinged with startling new odors from Titusville.

Yet it was for the contemplative that the subject "nature" held its strongest appeal, for it is clear that the theme of "nature" attracted more writers of personal essays than any other theme during our period.

Like other groups of essays in the era, the nature essays reveal certain characteristic patterns of subject matter, style, and tone. One unifying factor which immediately emerges is the widespread use of devices, stock situations, orders of events, and sequences of pictures--trite contrivances that were common property among the writers of these pieces. The structure of the familiar

essay would at first glance seem to argue against such uniformity; yet these essayists, like the followers of Addison discussed in Chapter Three, were notorious borrowers not only of titles and ideas but also of techniques and language. This wholesale adaptation with only the slightest of alterations is one explanation for the existence of the clearly defined patterns that may be pointed out.

A favorite nature subject was a scene in the country. Sometimes "the country" meant a specific location: Mount Holyoke, White Sulphur Springs, the Highlands of the Hudson.⁷ More often it just meant "in the country."⁸ For this kind of essay the most frequently used device was the reminiscence, or recollection by the author of a memorable rural scene in spring, summer, or autumn. (Winter scenes were also used but, as will be shown, in a different context.) The scene served as a canvas upon which the author-artist drew specific details: usually a meadow, a woods, and a stream. The meadow was always bright with blossoming flowers, always broad and green, with or without gamboling lambs, a flock of sheep, or a cow. Larks soared above, even in New Hampshire, gliding on gentle west winds which also carried the perfume of

⁷ See for example, Masonic Mirror, I (July 9, 1825), 3; New-England Magazine, III (September 1832), 222-227; Rural Repository, I (September 4, 1824), 49-50.

⁸ See for example, Atkinson's Casket, No. 1 (January 1833), pp. 39-40; Rural Repository, I (July 24, 1824), 29-31; Pearl, III (September 28, 1833), 32-33.

the blossoms. The woods were typically cool, quiet, and solemn--the abode of Nature's children; the trees, majestic oaks or towering elms, arched together at their crowns to form a natural cathedral. Openings in the foliage allowed mote-specked sunrays to filter down, as through stained-glass windows. If the stream cut through the meadow it was called a brook, sparkling and brilliant, sometimes singing, always melodious. If in the woods it was a rill or rivulet, flowing musically over mossy rocks and bridged by fallen forest giants. The meadow, woods, and stream served as foreground. The background might contain hazy outlines of purple mountains or simply undefined distant objects. The mountains were not climbed, nor were the distant objects brought into focus; they stood in silent testimony to the majesty, grandeur, mysterious vitality, and limitless reaches of Nature (i.e., of God).

Neither the scrupulous detail nor the elegant language of this composite is exaggerated here, although the synthesis took shape from hundreds of separate essays. Save for minor variations, "Amicus" wrote an essay like this for Hudson (New York) readers in 1824, "C. W. P." for Knickerbockers in 1825, and "H." one for Bostonians in 1833--to cite only three of scores.⁹ There were variables, of

⁹ Rural Repository, I (July 24, 1824), 29-31; American Athenaeum, I (October 27, 1825), 268-269; New-England Magazine, V (October 1833), 288-294. See also these: "Natural Scenery," Boston Literary Magazine, I (January 1833), 414-416. "A Scene in the Highlands," Western Monthly Magazine, III (March 1835), 162-164.

course, but these variables were of little moment in relation to the basic pattern. The woods in spring differed from the woods in autumn only in the adjectives used by the essayist to paint his picture.

With these details the favorite approach was the conversational one of direct address. "Suffer me to reconduct you to the simple, yet ever-blooming paths," began one writer.¹⁰ "You have sauntered, perhaps, of a moonlight evening," recalled another.¹¹ A third mused: "There is a pleasure in recalling to memory the days of our childhood, when in youthful buoyancy of spirits, we gamboled through flowery fields. . . ."¹² And the Michigan-born Charles Lanman, biographer of Daniel Webster, and later, Whitman's enemy, coaxed:

Reader, I invite thee to leave thy occupation for a little while, and come with me into the woods, and we will hold silent and holy communion with the visible forms of Nature. Come, and I will promise thee that when thou returnest thy heart will have become more peaceful and happy than it was before. Summer hath thrown open her leafy doors, leading to the voiceless

"Scene at Niagara Falls," Masonic Mirror, I (August 27, 1825), 4.

"The Hudson," The American Athenaeum, I (June 2, 1825), 50.

"Vermont," The Legendary (Boston, 1828), I, 112-115.

¹⁰ See note 9, American Athenaeum (first mention).

¹¹ Masonic Mirror, I (October 15, 1825), 4.

¹² American Athenaeum, I (November 24, 1825), 315.

woodlands, and by the perfume of her thousand flowers, invites us forth to enjoy the luxuries of her bounty. Let us depart, swift as the breeze.¹³

The device of the writer speaking directly to the reader as if in private conversation had come down unchanged from Montaigne to the nineteenth century American essayist.

And it was as effective as ever, an invitation not lightly refused. The reader would only have to leave the world of work "for a little while"; in other words, the reading time for this essay was certain to be short, and brevity was a virtue. We will go together, urges the writer, into the wonderful realm of Nature, into the blossoming countryside unblemished by factory or machine, away from the uninviting city. When we return, we will be more peaceful and happy than we were before, having breathed the "perfume of a thousand flowers" instead of the impure city air, and having walked through the leafy doors of Nature rather than the meaningless metal ones of business. Our ears, pounded by the city's din, have found relief in the "voiceless woodlands." And most important of all, we have the feeling that having accepted the invitation we have come closer to God.

¹³ "Afternoon in the Woodlands," Essays for Summer Hours (Boston, 1841), p. 9. Lanman had written for various periodicals beginning in 1835 but had not collected his essays into a single volume until after 1840. For an interesting Lanman letter about Whitman's Leaves of Grass and Whitman's discharge from government service, see New York Round Table, III (January 27, 1866), 61.

Personal is of course the key word. The fact that the reader is directly spoken to, that he is personally invited to share the experience of the writer, is the essence of the personal essay form whether the invitation is actually spoken as it is in Lanman's piece or only implied. Yet although the author records his impressions and at times even goes so far as to speculate on the values one may gain from "silent and holy communion . . . with Nature," it is the reader who makes the words come alive. The accountant who has worked for a long week under the pressure of office routine, under the constant surveillance of an unfeeling supervisor, can luxuriate in the lush pictures of green meadows dotted with bright flowers, secure in the knowledge that here are no ledgers with tedious columns of figures and no time schedules to meet. Or the housewife, weary of washing and ironing and floor-scrubbing, can steal a moment from her tiresome day to walk in cool forests or sit by a tinkling stream. And when she must return to reality she can look with a more appreciative eye at the window boxes and flower pots over which she has labored to coax something of the country into the city.

The style of the essay is designed to complement the intimate atmosphere. Sentences commonly begin with "Let us resume our walk" or "Here we come at last." First person is the rule, not the exception. The sentences, too, are usually short, or if long, are punctuated by frequent full stops so that only the dullest eye must re-read.

Yet part of the staccato effect of the short phrasing is eased by the writer's attention to euphony and flow. Alliteration is regularly employed: "the same sweet and soothing lessons"; "peaceful thoughts of purity"; "while it was singing a sweet song." Often, alliteration is coupled with expressive words of sound, and the result, though sentimental, is not unpleasant: "No sound is heard save the sighing of the gentle wind, and the dying murmur of rural sounds."¹⁴

For the most part, too, the vocabulary suits the range of the average reader. Technical terms, unusual polysyllables, and foreign language phrases are almost nonexistent. Yet, like those essayists who sought to follow Addison, the nature writers made no attempt to conceal their erudition, for there are numerous examples of long quotes from Shakespeare, Milton, and Dr. Johnson inserted.

Direct address, personal approach, intimate atmosphere, and suitable vocabulary are finally complemented and surely welded together by a tone which in the typical "country scene" essay was a mixture of admiration, wonder, awe, and exaltation--all sensations clearly discernible and in this order. After such an essay has issued its invitation to readers, and the walk through the meadow has begun, passages describing and esteeming Nature and her works

¹⁴ All examples in this paragraph have been taken from the Lanman essay, "Afternoon in the Woodlands." See note 13, above.

appear. "How beautiful the little vernal flower! Its leaves seem touched by the pencil of an angel!" Or: "A robin red breast, the bird of my young days . . . was singing in the unenclosed orchard, pouring its plaintive strain upon the solitude in notes as clear and sweet, as though thousands had been listening to applaud." Or again: ". . . the golden fields, the falling leaves, the overflowing granaries, and the plentiful fruits of autumn. . . ." ¹⁵ After admiration, wonder, as the writer pauses to reflect on the reasons for this beauty. The essayist in Atkinson's Casket avers: "Even in the inferior parts of creation, among the little things of our own earth, how much do we find to call forth wonder and inspire delight. Animate and inanimate nature is full of beauty and astonishing displays of superior wisdom" (p. 39). And he continues by cataloging natural wonders from dainty wild flowers to the "order and regularity of the crystal." The Athenaeum writer uses the phrases "impress my heart," "feelings of delight," and "hallowed marvels" to say essentially the same thing, and David Hoffman's "imagination" is "startled" by the beauties he views.

Awe supersedes wonder as the essayist recognizes that God is the Creator of all Nature. In "Forest Worship" William Gilmore Simms speaks in tones all other nature

¹⁵ Anon., "Nature," Atkinson's Casket, No. 1 (January 1833), p. 39; David Hoffman, "The White Sulphur Springs," New-England Magazine, III (September 1832), 222-227; C. W. P., "Autumn," American Athenaeum, I (October 27, 1825), 268-269.

writers would approve: "There, indeed, without much effort of the imagination, might be beheld the present God; the trees, hills, and vales, the wild flower and the murmuring water, all the work of his hands, attesting his power, keeping their purpose, and obeying, without scruple, the order of those seasons, for the sphere and operation of which he originally designed them. . . ."16 Even if God is not mentioned specifically, the identification is never left vague. The writer in Atkinson's Casket added that not only did the contemplation of natural beauties afford the "noblest, purest pleasures of the human mind," but that when a man gazes on them "as the workmanship of a great, and wise, and good Being, who can consider them without feelings of mingled admiration and awe!"

The final exaltation is attained when it is realized that God made Nature for Man to enjoy and profit from, and that through his contact with Nature Man can come closer to God. As Lanman implied in his opening paragraph, the man who has held "silent and holy communion" with Nature will return more peaceful and happy than before. An anonymous essayist in the Pearl expressed the same thought in terms of the "Harmony of Nature," while another in the American Magazine asserted that Nature, especially at the close of day in autumn, became the "parent of solemn

16 Family Magazine, III (September 1835), 245-246.

ideas."¹⁷

Tone and style, then, two of the factors central to the familiar essay form, here complement and reinforce each other to a significant degree. The direct address and the confidential tone are introduced in the opening sentence of an essay and are then reasserted in every succeeding paragraph. By using such terms of address as "My friend" and "Kind reader," and by never varying from the first person singular and plural, the writer strengthens the sense of the real as opposed to the fictional experience. Frequent employment of words which arouse the senses of smell, sight, and sound further implement this aura of actuality; and if the author has used his stylistic machinery to describe picturesque, appealing, and credible scenes, he has met a most important condition set down for the familiar essayist: "For the familiar essay affords what is probably the best method of discussing those subjects which are neither obviously momentous nor merely silly."¹⁸

In these "nature scene" essays a frequently perceivable influence is that of the English Romantic Movement. Specifically, it is the influence of Wordsworth, for although others of the Romantics unquestionably appear

¹⁷ IV (March 14, 1835), 218; I (October 1834), 49.

¹⁸ Joseph Wood Krutch, "No Essays, Please!" The Saturday Review (March 10, 1951), p. 19.

(Byron is a frequent visitor), in comparison to Wordsworth their effect is a lesser one.

Precise evidence of Wordsworth's general impact on American literature and literary men of this period has been gathered together in a recent bibliography of Wordsworth in America up to 1825.¹⁹ From reading in this list of sources the student may see that Americans of the post-Ghent years knew the work of the poet and that they admired it in spite of a significant body of adverse criticism. After 1825, too, and continuing to the end of our period in 1835, there was no slackening of attention given by Americans to the author of The Excursion, though it must be admitted that the number of denigratory remarks by American critics appear actually to have increased in this decade.²⁰ An anonymous but outspoken critic in the Boston Weekly Magazine had set the stage for these fault-finding assays when in 1819 he wrote a two-page tirade defending Pope against Wordsworth.²¹ Another, in The Columbian Observer three years later was "disgusted" by Wordsworth, annoyed by Southey ("a worse poet, a duller writer, or a

¹⁹ Jack Barnes, "A Bibliography of Wordsworth in American Periodicals Through 1825," Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America, LII (Third Quarter, 1958), 205-219.

²⁰ An excellent discussion of the vicissitudes of Wordsworth's reputation in America is given by William Charvat in The Origins of American Critical Thought 1810-1835 (Philadelphia, 1936), pp. 71-76, 86-92.

²¹ Untitled article, Boston Weekly Magazine, III (April 10, 1819), 86-87.

more envious malignant . . . never disgraced the literary annals of Great Britain"), and thrilled by Byron: "It is astonishing . . . with what pertinacity the enemies of Byron continue to knock their indurated skulls against the rock of his fame. . . ." ²² But perhaps the most scornful lashing the English Romantics received during the period came from the pen of Whittier. In a defense of the poetic ability of J. G. C. Brainard, Whittier fumed:

What poet of modern days has ever published a perfect volume?--Byron threw his hasty but powerful productions before the public with beauty wedded to deformity. Southey "discourses fustian" in his Joan of Arc; and in the midst of his wild dream of Eastern wonder tells his ridiculous story of Kehama's ride into Hell over nine several bridges. Wordsworth, with all his fine perceptions of natural beauty, and his exquisite philosophy, sinks at times into the most disgusting puerility,--the pathos and sentiment of an over-grown baby.* Even the gifted Shelley wearies us with his sickly conceits and unsubstantial theories;--and the author of St. Agnes Eve is mawkish and affected in his Endymion. ²³

As was the case with Irving when he was attacked for absenteeism and his use of English themes, Wordsworth had stout defenders in America. Although he was not able to prevent Whittier's blast from seeing print, the editor of the Pearl, Isaac C. Pray, saw to it that readers were given both sides of the question. At the point marked by an

²² I (July 20, 1822), 121-122.

²³ Pearl, III (April 12, 1834), 144-146.

asterisk in the Whittier article, Pray inserted the following note:

We think this epithet not only out of taste, but uncalled for, and unjust. It is natural for a mind like Mr. Whittier's--evidently of the Byron cast--to call those ideas puerile, which awaken the slumbering emotions of the bosom and cast a calmer and holier charm on the scenes of childhood and early life; but a keen examination of Wordsworth's theory and of his writings would show that there is much more worthy of attention in that bard's writings than, at first sight, appears.

Even considering all this activity pro and con, one must marvel at the astonishing number of allusions, at the frequency and extent of the quotations, and at the variety of ways in which Wordsworth's poetry was put to use by American admirers. Surface indications cry to be enumerated. The most common of these, understandably, is the insertion of some of Wordsworth's lines suddenly recalled by the essayist while in the midst of an effusive outpouring over a particularly entrancing scene. In point, after Lanman has written, "The sun is up, and the earth, like a slumbering bride is awakened by his first warm kiss. . . . The lark springs from her retreat and strains her little throat in singing praises to her glorious Creator," he turns to Wordsworth's Descriptive Sketches for the eighteen-line passage which begins:

With gold the verdant mountain glows;
More high the snowy peaks with hues of rose.

At the end of the quotation Lanman sighs: "O Wordsworth!
 how my heart blesses thee for such strains as these!"²⁴
 And an anonymous contributor to Waldie's Port Folio wrote:
 "I love our bold fleecy clouds, whose constant motions
 give an appearance of life to our skies. Wordsworth is
 the only poet who has made any use of the clouds. [!] In
 his Excursion, this beautiful thought is suggested by a
 solitary spot--'In such a place I would not willingly,
 methinks, lose sight of a departing cloud'."²⁵

At other times Wordsworth's verses provided the theme
 or the "inspiration" for an entire essay. His quatrain
 from "Expostulation and Reply,"

To her fair work did Nature link
 The human soul that through me ran;
 And much it grieved my heart to think
 What man has made of man,

supplied the central idea for Elizabeth Margaret Chandler's
 "Human Unhappiness."²⁶ And the famous five lines from the
 "Intimations" ode,

Not in entire forgetfulness,
 And not in utter nakedness,
 But trailing clouds of glory, do we come
 From God who is our home.
 Heaven lies about us in our infancy,

²⁴ "Summer Morning," Essays for Summer Hours, pp. 102-103.

²⁵ "The Suicide," Port Folio, Part II (August 15, 1835), 51.

²⁶ Essays . . . by Elizabeth Margaret Chandler (Philadelphia, 1836), p. 104. Bound with The Poetical Works of Elizabeth Margaret Chandler (Philadelphia, 1836).

appear at the end of an essay entitled "Children" in Waldie's Port Folio of March 28, 1835. Incongruously, on May 9, 1835, Wordsworth is used to introduce "The Poetry of Phrenology. A Sketch" in the same magazine, and on August 1, an entire article, "Yarrow Revisited," is reprinted in the Port Folio from the London Spectator.²⁷

Of more interest and significance, however, than mere surface indications is the influence of Romantic ideas and currents of emphases in these American nature writings. The range of feeling from mere awareness to powerful passion; the importance given to sensory impression; the "confession" or revelation of self; the belief of the immanence of God in the visible forms of Nature; man's position in relation to Nature (and, by extension, to God); attention to the lot of the common man--all these characteristics of the English Romanticists are also evident in the American nature essay of this period.²⁸

Range of feeling recalls Wordsworth's well known definition of poetry. As we have seen, a typical nature essay

²⁷ I, 97, 153, 206.

²⁸ Two noticeable omissions here are the Romanticists' attention to past ages and to exotic or faraway places, which the American nature essayists generally ignored. Under pressure to glorify America and her present natural beauty, the nature writers were understandably loath to emphasize an imaginary past not American, especially since most of them could not afford the criticism directed at Irving for his preoccupation with present and past English scenes and customs, or at Cooper for "imitating" Scott's antiquarianism. The exotic, finally, was usually left to the travel writers and to the fictionists.

could begin with the author's description of a walk through a meadow; such a walk occasioned a rest beside a stream, or under an oak, or in a cool copse. The brief rest, in turn, was conducive to reflection or meditation, during which, with the writer at peace--in a state of "wise passiveness"--all-pervading Nature would influence his heart benignly and wisely. What had begun as a mere stroll to bask in the visible beauty of sun and flower and earth had become an exalting ("philosophical") experience that, later recollected in tranquillity, the writer could share with his reader by means of words. Such a pattern is exemplified by James Gordon Brooks's "Evening," which emphasizes the contemplation theme by insisting that the hour of dusk "outvies every other hour in time" for profitable reflection.²⁹ David Hoffman's "Viator" pauses for rest in a "deserted habitation, so lonely, so forest and mountain-girt," and has his reverie stimulated by the plaintive song of a bird.³⁰ And two anonymous writers using "Reflections" and "Sublimity" as titles relied heavily on this typical pattern of events and sensations.³¹

To enhance the "range of feeling" effect nature writers designed their initial descriptive passages to evoke sensory impressions. Words of color, sound, and motion

²⁹ American Athenaeum, I (April 21, 1825), 8.

³⁰ New-England Magazine, III (September 1832), 222-227.

³¹ Atkinson's Casket, No. 3 (March 1833), pp. 116, 128.

predominate, as in this passage: "Not a breath of air dimpled the smooth water, or rustled among the withered leaves of the grove; and no sound broke upon the silence; save now and then, the croak of a frog from the farther side of the water; or the silvery and mellow music of a small rivulet, that wound its way over pebbles, and fell into the basin below."³² These sensory images continue without interruption or interpolation of comment until the moment at which the walker decides to rest. The place chosen is depicted briefly, also in words of color and dimension to assure its reality for readers: "Here we come at last to my favorite retreat. It is a little shady dell, through the center of which a little rivulet goes murmuring along. A tree has fallen across, which will answer the purpose of a bridge. On that we will again seat ourselves."³³ At this point--the moment at which reflection begins--the purely sensory pictures gradually acquire more significance. Words with different overtones suggest that it is time for both writer and reader to consider the reason for the existence of this beauty and the values to be derived from man's awareness of it. Lanman continues:

³² "The Scenery of Autumn," The Literary Journal and Weekly Register, I (November 30, 1833), 205.

³³ "Afternoon in the Woodlands," p. 14. For other, similar passages see Hoffman's cabin scene (note 30), Brooks's scene at the edge of a field (note 29), or "Amicus's" hill at the edge of a meadow (note 9, first entry).

This nameless brook is the most constant of all my friends, for every time I come here it teaches me the same sweet and soothing lessons. Even when clasped in the cold embrace of winter, it has a voice of instruction. . . . It was the delight of my youth to come all alone to this lonely spot . . . to study the mysteries of the Universe. . . . I held communion with my own heart; looked deep into that fountain, and wondered at the shadows which were wont to darken its unruffled waters. I have mused on the holy character of God, and on my own insignificance; and these thoughts have made me humbled, though contented and happy. In these solitudes I prepared myself to meet with fortitude the troubles and trials of active life (p. 15).

As early as the introductory paragraph, phrases such as "silent and holy communion" and words such as "thee," "thou," and "hath" provide a kind of spiritual undertone to the descriptive material. As the essay continues, these echoes of biblical language are augmented by actual quotations from the Bible. In point, when the oak tree is admired, the writer recalls that under its shadow "Abraham rested in the heat of the day"; a grape vine reminds him "of those comforting words which came from the lips of our Savior, when he said to his disciples--'I am the true vine; my Father is the husbandman; and ye are the branches'" (p. 12). It is no surprise, then, that this "lonely spot" should serve more than one purpose in the essay: it is not only beautiful to the eye but also to the mind and soul. Here, one understands, a man of good faith may study (and by implication, may discover) the "mysteries of the Universe." Here he may muse on the "holy character of God

[and] prepare [himself] to meet with fortitude the . . . trials of active life." Finally, by extension, the "nameless brook" enables him to hold communion.

By this time in the essay the religious undertone has risen to the level of the primary theme, and although the purely descriptive strain regains importance as the walker turns toward home, the organ music never retreats into the background but continues as a canon to the pictorial material. Appropriately for both themes, the essay ends as evening falls. The physical is put to rest when "Silence has again settled upon town, hamlet, and cottage. . . . Nature and all her works have retired to repose." And the spiritual is concluded when the organ tones murmur a benediction: "God is looking down upon the world in watchfulness and love" (p. 20).

In addition to using the techniques of the first person, the meditative tone, and the professedly real personal experience, these essayists sought to enhance the intimate tone of their writing through confession or self-revelation. Sometimes implied, as in the examples cited above, this soul-baring was just as often explicit. Titles like "Confessions," "Soliloquy," and "Memories" occur in clusters in periodicals of the era, and as has been said, produced an atmosphere conducive to confession.³⁴ Occasionally, an

³⁴ See, for example, the following unsigned essays: "Musings," The Essayist, I (March 1832), 81-84. "Reverie," Western Monthly Magazine, II (March 1834), 113-119.

essayist might use the technique of moving from object to subject through associated ideas. One unknown writer spoke for a large group like himself when he used his library as the object and moved thence to the subject, "Reflections."³⁵ "Alpha" found "Sleeping" and "Dreaming" equally efficient as stimuli;³⁶ and "A Quiet Man" wrote of "A Watering Place Recollection."³⁷ But more often than any other device, the American country scene induced the contemplative mood which served as prelude to the essayist's self-examination or narration of recollected experience. "D. M." recommended the Ohio countryside as perfect for such an atmosphere in "A Vision," although a New England village would serve as well, wrote a Bostonian.³⁸

Blended with the spiritual and revelatory overtones is a moral strain impossible to ignore. As in Lanman's essay, the reader is promised in the first paragraph that when he returns from his communion with Nature he will be

"Solitude," Virginia Evangelical and Literary Magazine, IV (February 1821), 63-69.
 "Confessions," New-England Magazine, II (May 1832), 421-424.
 "Soliloquy of a Man of 95 Years," Masonic Mirror, I (July 9, 1825), 4.

³⁵ American Athenaeum, I (December 29, 1825), 377.

³⁶ Constellation, II (June 18, 1831), 245; II (July 30, 1831), 289.

³⁷ American Athenaeum, I (September 1, 1825), 169-170.

³⁸ New-England Magazine, IV (April 1833), 307-309; II (March 1832), 192-196.

more "peaceful and happy" than he was before. He will be, to say it another way, a better husband or companion; if the reader is a woman, which was likely, she will be a better wife and mother. Relations with fellowmen will be improved. The contemplation of the peace, happiness, and purity of Nature will uplift and refine character. The "thousand tongues" of the woods will adjure the visitor to consider "thoughts of the purest and most exalted kind." After reading about the "wicked mortal [who] has pulled up one of [Nature's] sassafras trees," or who has caused "the death of a favorite flower" by thoughtlessly tearing it off its stem, no man of character could thereafter thus offend the "guardian-spirit of flower, plant, or tree." And if there are then any doubts remaining in the reader's mind concerning the benign and valuable influences Nature has upon men, they are dispelled by the final, incontrovertible argument advanced by the writer as he triumphantly exclaims: "Tell me not that the woods are mute and lonely! Ah, no--they have a thousand tongues, and are the home of many of Nature's most beautiful creatures. They are the favorite resort of poets and philosophers" [*italics mine*].

Yet this is clearly not the muscular morality so endlessly and woodenly exhorted by the myriad scribblers who sought to follow Addison. By and large, those guardians of society stood solemnly apart in impersonal self-righteousness while they lashed at error or pleaded with backsliders. Not so with the nature essayists. In their

writing the ethical implications are as strong, and the road to the good life is as frequently pointed out, but in a lower key. The adjuring tone is mild, and the sense of "let us go together" not only effectively smothers the tendency to lecture but also implies personal involvement of the writer.

Of course, it might well have been unwise for nature essayists to have avoided the moral issue. In an age so gaited to a virtuous lockstep, with even the business houses insisting on employees' attendance at church service twice weekly, at prayer meetings another two days, strict temperance, and "no acquaintance, front- or back-stage, with members of the theatrical profession," the essayists could ill afford not to assist the Addisonians, the American Tract Society, the American Bible Society, and the American Sunday School Union in their zealous shepherd-ing of the reading public's piety.³⁹ Moreover, their attention to the ethics of Americans generally, was practically unavoidable, since as a group the nature essayists were unanimous not only in their reverent adoration of Nature and her beauty but also in their indictment of the industrial progress which had already begun to invade the countryside.

Explicitly and by suggestion, the nature essayists preached the doctrine of the immanence of God in nature,

³⁹ E. Douglas Branch, The Sentimental Years, 1836-1860 (New York, 1934), p. 39.

and the resultant syllogism denied His presence in the ugly, sooty cities. "Where sin and impurity are known, peace and happiness are strangers," accused Lanman. Even the mild-mannered Theodore Sedgwick Fay lamented: "Only think that the tender grass and flower bushes have been torn away to make room for . . . flag stones. Perhaps on this very spot once stood a grove of venerable trees, and a torrent poured its silvery and flashing waters on toward the river. . . . And what have we now? A row of three-story brick houses, a grocery store, a lottery office, a tavern."⁴⁰ And William Cox complained: "It is but as the other day when the forest flourished where now 'merchants most do congregate,' and the streamlet murmured where the gin-shop stands. . . . The wigwam sent its tiny wreaths of smoke into the clear air, where now the bank coffee-house pours forth volumes of odoriferous steam to mingle with the masses of vapor that overhang the city like a cloud. . . ."⁴¹ In the manner of a sales agent for a mid-twentieth century suburban development, "Edward" counseled readers of the Masonic Mirror that they might escape the smog decried by Cox if they lived in a country village rather than in a city.⁴² Indeed, country villages were in all respects superior to noisy cities; even Washington Irving had suggested

⁴⁰ "Town and Country," Dreams and Reveries of a Quiet Man (New York, 1832), II, 86.

⁴¹ Crayon Sketches (New York, 1833), I, 101.

⁴² I (May 21, 1825), 4.

that one reason for the boorishness of the nouveau riche family in "The Country Church" was their godless, mannerless, city-slum origin.

The progress of science shared the obloquy that the nature essayists heaped on industry and on the expanding cities. An occasional essayist, it is true, was stimulated to "universal enquiry" by one of the marvels of the new science:

When we think of more than 26,000 creatures living, obtaining sustenance, and moving perfectly at ease, within the nothing of a drop of water, how unconsciously is the mind led on to universal enquiry . . . what is life on its grandest scale, but a grosser type of this bubble of a world? what are the actions of men, their passions, or their hearts, but the figuration of a world whose limits are the circumference of a waterdrop?⁴³

But more frequently the nature writers echoed the sentiment earlier expressed by Irving's Squire Bracebridge: "It makes my heart bleed to see all our fine streams dammed up and bestrode by cotton mills; our valleys smoking with steam-engines, and the din of the hammer and the loom scaring away all our rural delights."⁴⁴ As a group they vilified science, first, because it abetted the hydra of industry as its factories, shops, and sprawling cities encroached upon nature; second, because it attempted to turn the minds of

⁴³ Anon., "A Bubble of a World," Minerva, II n.s. (October 9, 1824), 13-14.

⁴⁴ Bracebridge Hall; or, The Humorists (London, 1822), II, 28.

men toward a mundane explanation of the mysteries of existence; and third, because these writers felt that it was responsible for the creation of two new classes--the haves and the have-nots, the employers and the employees.

The employer, a rich man, could have little interest in the beauties of nature or in the presence of God in nature because he was too engrossed in the business of making money. What is more, decisively wrote Helen C. Cross in Atkinson's Casket:

Luxury gratifies every appetite; but gratification only awakens and creates others, which in their turn crave to be satisfied, until the constitution at length is undermined by excess, and its vigor and strength are sapped at their foundations.--Riches bring a plenitude of pleasures, which riches alone can purchase; pleasures touching the passions and kindling the imagination. The mind becomes fascinated and excited; but it is a thrilling excitement, playing upon the feelings without producing in the end the charms of rational enjoyment. Objects, new and novel, are continually presented to the senses, dividing the attention by their beauty and variety;--no restraints are placed to repress the ardor of youthful feeling; the gush of opening passion, until the vigor of thought and strength of the understanding are wasted away, upon vain and frivolous objects, and the activity sinks into sluggish indifference--though young in years, the beautiful fabric of the mind will become the dwelling of wayward fancies and unhallowed thoughts, incapacitated for those high intellectual delights which need perseverance to attain, and discipline to appreciate.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ "Is Poverty Favorable to Genius?" Atkinson's Casket, No. 5 (May 1833), p. 229.

The laborer, too, could have no interest in nature because the machine created by the demon science had gradually become the master of his mind, his energies, and his leisure time. This essentially antagonistic dualism of nature and progress for the common man is emphasized in an essay by Edward Bradford, "Custom vs. Nature," in the previously mentioned "The Village," and in "On Rural Life," signed "S. L."⁴⁶ And that a turn toward nature (i.e., toward God) is the only salvation for all men is made clear in "Religious and Virtuous Principles Necessary to the Permanency of Our Institutions."⁴⁷ Yet the familiar essayists of our period as a rule stopped short of the kind of criticism voiced in England nearly a decade later by Thomas Hood in "Song of the Shirt" and by Mrs. Browning in "The Cry of the Children." Although throngs of polemicists, and some of the sentimentalists, were horror-struck at the squalor and poverty of lower-class laborers, not until the 1840's in America were the familiar essayists as a group ready to join Harriet Farley's voice of dolorous pitch in moans of dismay at the situation of the worker under the iron rule of the rich: "The laborer--and who is he? A man, made a little lower than the angels, and stamped with the impress of his heavenly Father: a man and a brother to him who will not soil, with slightest manual employment, his snowy hand,

⁴⁶ The Essayist, I (February 1832), 49-51; Masonic Mirror, I (May 21, 1825), 4; Minerva, I n.s. (April 24, 1824), 44-45.

⁴⁷ W. H. S. J., Boston Literary Magazine, I (April 1833), 550-553.

or costly vestment; a man, and though too often degraded to a station but little above the brute, yet may be, in some future time, the companion of angels."⁴⁸

Many of the essays which dealt with the dualism of nature and progress, especially ones like "Religious and Virtuous Principles Necessary to the Permanency of Our Institutions" and "Is Poverty Favorable to Genius?" suggest two other ideas current among the nature writers: the age-old, and still today often heard, precept that man must labor with his hands and eschew luxury to be virtuous; and the warning that only the divine being, not science, can explain the mysteries of existence. No science can account for the surprising "order and regularity of the crystal. So exact, that amidst a million of the same species, no difference in angle and form can be detected," wrote another Atkinson's contributor.⁴⁹ And the prolific David Hoffman, whose pen scratched the surface of every plane of emphasis current in the era, disposed of empiricism in one scornful denial:

Whether we contemplate the starry orbs, . . .
or descend to this our globe, and examine
the admirable conformity of the whole; or
whether we enter into the bowels of the
earth, and behold the rich mines of valu-
able metals, earths, spars and fossils of
various kinds; or lastly, whether we exam-
ine the meanest of nature's animated beings,

⁴⁸ Shells from the Strand of the Sea of Genius (Boston, 1847), pp. 124-125.

⁴⁹ Anon., "Nature," Atkinson's Casket, No. 1 (January 1833), p. 39.

we cannot but be lost in amazement at the wonderful mechanism, the wisdom, goodness and mercy displayed in their formation! The existence of a God being sanctioned by such irrefragable evidence, how blind, nay how perfectly stupid must he be, who would attribute this exquisite workmanship to the fortuitous junction of atoms, the whirling of vortices, or the principle of elementary attractions!⁵⁰

In spite of the vehemence and frequency of these protests, it must not be thought that they were of a political cast. The nature essayists studiously ignored politics in general and local issues in particular, not only because the subjects seemed to have little place among their favorite themes but also because the general magazines to which these writers sent their material made a point of avoiding this kind of controversial issue.⁵¹ Actually, these protests are better termed the result of a deep-rooted indignation felt by the nature writers over man's apparent disregard of the fact that the onrushing technology was rapidly invading and scarring the primeval purity of forests, mountains, streams, and meadows. All three culprits--progress (science), the employer, and the employee--deserved reprimand, in that order and in descending degree. That the sympathies of the essayists lay with the common man, therefore, is not unexpected. The machine and its creator, science, were the

⁵⁰ "An Olla-Podrida," Viator (Baltimore, 1841), p. 227.

⁵¹ See, for example, the attitude of the New-York Mirror toward the controversy over New York City's new water system proposals: XII (May 2, 1835), 351.

paramount evil and were scored with unremitting vehemence. The employer incurred the enmity of the nature writer because although he possessed the means wherewith to enjoy and protect natural beauty, he did nothing about it; instead he permitted, even assisted, progress in its campaign against "defenseless" nature. Finally, the employee, who bore the formidable yoke of both a heartless progress and an unfeeling employer, was chided only for his failure to realize that communion with nature was, together with belief in God, his best hope for bettering his life.

Another significantly large group of nature essayists reflected the continuing influence of the "graveyard school" of writers both English and American. While many of their fellows were extolling the beauties of flower and mountain and struggling to resist an advancing science, the melancholy essayists--a not improper name--were one with early nineteenth century American poets in their admiration of Thomson, Gray, and Edward Young, especially of The Seasons, the "Elegy" and "Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College," and the very popular Night Thoughts. In 1827 Bryant was still searching for poetic subjects among the tombs and churchyards, and in one ode to death he adumbrated a famous theme used later by Charles Eliot Norton and A. E. Housman:

Happy they who die in youth,
Ere the fountain springs of truth
Have been sullied by the rains,
Leaving dark and deadly stains.

Their renown is with the brave,
 All their faults are in the grave,
 And the flowers, that round them bloom,
 Chase the darkness,--hide the gloom.⁵²

Percival wrote "Lays of the Seasons" for the Atlantic Souvenir of 1830, an imitation of Thomson which Sarah Josepha Hale missed in her enumeration of "plagiarisms" in that issue of that annual.⁵³ And the sentimental poets as a group--Lydia Sigourney, James Nack, Willis Clark, and a throng of lesser lights--echoed the graveyard poets or their American followers equally volubly, if not equally well.

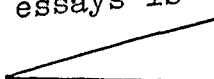
The melancholy essayists found the churchyard and the grave as conducive to the contemplative mood as other essayists found meadows and woods. "Church-Yard Reveries," "Immortality," and "Reflections on Human Glory" are usual titles and, less often, "Transmigrations," "Death," and "The Mutability of Human Grandeur" occur. Despite differences in titles, however, standard themes are as regularly apparent as are standard devices and approaches. As in the other nature essays, a melancholy piece usually begins with a personal invitation to the reader: "You have sauntered, perhaps, of a moonlight evening, out of the precincts of

⁵² "Weep Not for the Youthful Dead," United States Review and Literary Gazette, I (February 1827), 379-380. For Norton's verses to Emerson, "Blest of the highest gods are they who die / Ere youth has fled," see Sara Norton and M. A. DeWolfe Howe, eds., Letters of Charles Eliot Norton (Boston, 1913), I, 511-512.

⁵³ Ladies' Magazine, II (November 1829), 531-534.

the living, moving world, to linger and contemplate among the grass grown memorials of those who have gone. . . ."⁵⁴
 On occasion, a narrative opening, less often used by other nature essayists, sounds an almost instructive note, but one which is at the same time clever psychology: "There is a species of melancholy which perhaps none but minds of uncommonly exquisite sensibility are susceptible. To them there are seasons when grief is a luxury. . . ."⁵⁵

The device of the stroll is unchanged; only the destination and the place chosen for rest are different. Other devices, however, are specifically chosen for their relation to the subject matter. The engraved headstone, the marble vault, the end of the year (the "dying year"), a rainy day, home, and the winter season are constantly used as objects seen or remembered and then mused on, as places or objects which invite the stroller to pause, and as heavy machinery for imagery.

Surprisingly standard, the tone of these essays is best described by the musical crescendo sign  . As may be seen in the two introductory selections cited on the previous page, in the beginning of these essays the tone is somber and hushed. The hour, usually evening and often moonlit, demands it. As the walker proceeds, the tone remains quiet; in the introductory section of the "Church

⁵⁴ Anon., "The Church Yard," Masonic Mirror, I (October 15, 1825), 4.

⁵⁵ Masonic Mirror, I (March 12, 1825), 4.

Yard," words of rest and only the gentlest motion are used: sauntered, moonlight, linger, contemplate, memorials.

Throughout the stroll and the pause for rest, no alteration of tone or style. Then, as the meditation becomes the center of the essay and the successive ideas of melancholy, death, those who have gone before, and oblivion give way to the swelling optimism of victory over death and the grave, resurrection, and eternal life, the once quiet tones brighten and become intense, and then come to an end in tones of jubilation which recall Irving's description of organ sounds in "Westminster Abbey." Such a pattern of style, tone, structure, and development is found in the anonymous essays, "Contemplation and Meditation," "Reflections in a Grave Yard," and "Hope of Futurity," to cite three of a large number of such pieces.⁵⁶ A paragraph from one essay will suffice as illustration:

There is no scene better calculated to inspire melancholy contemplation, than the grave yard. There, in that repository of the triumphs of death, that land of silence and gloom, repose the proud and the rich, the poor and the humble.--Strife is forgotten--the tongue of slander is dumb--the voice of censure is hushed--the guilty and contaminated are beside the child of angelic purity--kings, heroes, and subjects, moulder together, and are forgotten. The fairest sons of genius, lie beside the senseless idiot, and the greatest beauty sinks down by the most disgusting deformity--titles

⁵⁶ Pearl, IV (April 18, 1835), 255; "E. K. B.," The Philadelphia Visiter, I (September 1835), 151; American Athenaeum, I (June 23, 1825), 80.

are unknown--distinctions are annihilated, and all sleep in forgetfulness in the earth's cold bosom. Is this the end of man? No! There is a fairer world beyond the sea of terrestrial sorrows and anxieties--a realm of consecrated beatitude--a clime of unspeakable delight. There the countenance of sorrow is changed to smiles, and delightful and enrapturing joys will repay a life of sorrow and pain!⁵⁷

Generally ignored by the "nature scene" essayists, the "shadowy grandeur of the past" was a favorite theme among the melancholy writers and was often linked to or engendered by the theme of the winter season and its sub-themes--fireside, snow and cold, and the symbolic death of the year. Such a title as "Fire-Side Pleasures, Through the Period of a December Day" was sure to lead the reader through a personal introduction, an invitation to sit and soak up cozy warmth, a reminiscence, and a nostalgic return to youth or to the glories of past ages.⁵⁸ Each December, every periodical contained the inevitable essay on the dying year, such as Joseph T. Buckingham's "Reflections for the Close of the Year," written for the

⁵⁷ L. W. Trask, "The Grave--A Fragment," Atkinson's Casket, No. 6 (June 1833), p. 257.

⁵⁸ See, for example, the following anonymous essays:
 "Fireside Reflections," Literary Casket, I (April 29, 1826), 43.
 "The Winter Hearth-Fire," Pearl, III (December 7, 1833), 73.
 "Fireside Pleasures," Minerva, II n.s. (March 26, 1825), 397-398.
 "Reflections," American Athenaeum, I (December 22, 1825), 366.

sixth issue of the New-England Magazine's first volume.⁵⁹ Indeed, winter issues of periodicals generally found room for more essays that recalled youthful pleasures, the value to the individual man of his home (his birthplace), and, in fact, more nostalgic essays of all kinds. Euphemisms for death--essays on sleep and on dreaming, some of those entitled "Reverie" and some titled "Solitude"--appear as frequently.

In some ways these nature essays look forward to mid-nineteenth century American transcendentalism. In their admiration of and reverence for the loveliness of natural beauty they adumbrate Thoreau's A Week and The Maine Woods. Their enmity toward the new machine, too, suggests the famous Thoreauvian diatribe on the railroad or his annoyance at the pencil factory or his scornful decimation of men who spend their lives in getting. In their anger directed at those who would search for scientific explanations of the mysteries of the universe they are as indignant as Sampson Reed, nor had they forgotten the sonorous adjurations of William Ellery Channing the elder, who had sounded the keynote of emerging transcendentalism as early as 1815. Like the transcendentalists in general, the nature essayists were disposed to interpret nature as an ethical force and to dismiss preoccupation with economics and politics as injurious to

⁵⁹ I (December 1831), 513-519.

the nobility of man--especially the man who had seen the good and the beautiful in nature and had recognized that the fountainhead of the good and the beautiful was God. Like Thoreau they cried, "Simplicity! Simplicity! Simplicity!" and like Emerson they tried to focus their attention on the underlying relationship of man to nature.

Nevertheless, to imply that these nature essayists do more than suggest links to American transcendentalism would be an egregious error. Though they revered nature and admired its surface beauty, they were neither equipped nor disposed to ask, as Emerson asked, "Whence Is the Flower?" Though they sound like Thoreau in deploring the deleterious effect of science and technology on man, by and large they sang the party song without knowing all the words; they would not, for example, have understood that although Thoreau shouted defiance at the Fitchburg Railroad he could still be titillated by its strange new power into writing the Homeric passage on the fire-steed in Walden. They would not have understood Emerson's being intrigued by the puzzle of the world around him, by his interest in "Circles" as emblems "in the cipher of the world," or by his interest in science as a possible provider of hints to explain man's relationship to the enigma of existence. His Nature (1836) would have confounded the best of them, as would Thoreau's metaphysical game with the loon or his equally metaphysical speculations on Walden Pond being the eye of God.

There are links, to be sure, between the nature essays of the 1820's and the writings of transcendentalism, but they are better described as superficial ones. As a group the nature essayists' interest in the beauties of external nature reflects their response to flowing currents of nationalism rather than to abiding interest in the cipher of existence. If there was one incontestable point of American superiority over something European, it was the great American country, some of it unexplored and uninhabited by white men, much of it excitingly rugged and primeval, and all of it surpassingly beautiful. Their ethical comment was equally as innocent, uncomplicated by metaphysical or philosophical questions more enigmatic than a syllogism that went something like this: God had made nature for man; man could naturally derive benefit from nature to make himself a better man; therefore, man could come closer to God by reverencing nature.

Finally, though certain of these nature essays speak in stern tones to the imminent backslider about his obligations, the greater number of them cajole rather than exhort, and demonstrate by tone and device a personal involvement of reader and writer not often seen in the moral essays on intemperance and gambling. And in their employment of emotion-provoking devices such as the reminiscence, the contemplative reflection, and the nostalgic musing, they come a full step closer to the belletristic essay of Irving and Lamb.

CHAPTER V

"THE PRIDE OF THE VILLAGE": WASHINGTON IRVING, JAMES KIRKE PAULDING, AND THE KNICKERBOCKER ESSAYISTS

When the first issue of Salmagundi considerably brightened the overcast Saturday morning of January 24, 1807, New York readers doubtless recognized in its avowed purpose--"to instruct the young, reform the old, correct the town, and castigate the age"--an echo of the century-old Tatler and Spectator papers.¹ What these same readers certainly observed but might not have attributed any moment to, appeared in that same first issue over the signature of "Launcelot Langstaff, Esq.": "In two words--we write for no other earthly purpose but to please ourselves. . . . While we continue to go on, we will go on merrily: if we moralize, it shall be but seldom; and on all occasions we shall be more solicitous to make our readers laugh than cry--for we are laughing philosophers. . ." (I, 18). Admittedly, there was no reason for subscribers to have given this statement especial notice in 1807; its significance, indeed, did not become apparent until after the publication of the Sketch

¹ Washington Irving, Salmagundi; or, the Whim-Whams and Opinions of Launcelot Langstaff, Esq., and Others (New York, 1835), I, 14. All references to Salmagundi are to this two-volume edition and are included in the text.

Book and Bracebridge Hall more than a dozen years later, when with these volumes Washington Irving became the first American literary artist to achieve international reputation and the first American literary man to attract enough imitators and emulators among his contemporaries and followers to form a "circle." As Ferdinand Künzig pointed out nearly half a century ago, one major difference between Salmagundi and the Spectator and Tatler was the fact that the Irvings and Paulding, in the persons of William Wizard, Anthony Evergreen, and Launcelot Langstaff, never took themselves seriously about "instruction and reform" and were content if they succeeded merely in entertaining their readers.² However, when viewed in the light of the myriad followers of Addison and Steele discussed in an earlier chapter--followers who not only professed the dual purpose of edification and amusement but also made demonstrable efforts to exemplify it--this point does assume paramount importance. For although like the essays discussed in Chapter Three, Salmagundi I professed "to instruct, reform, and castigate," it also remarked: "If in the course of this work we edify, and instruct, and amuse the public, so much the better for the public;--but we frankly acknowledge, that so soon as we get tired of reading our own works, we shall discontinue them without the least remorse. . ." (I, 18).

² Washington Irving und seine Beziehungen zur englischen Literatur des 18. Jahrhunderts (Heidelberg, 1911). See "Einflüsse des Spectators," pp. 13-45.

E. C. Coleman has called these statements in Salmagundi "little less than a Declaration of Literary Independence. For the first time the literary men in America dared to declare themselves not quite but almost free of didactic purpose."³ And although Dr. Coleman, in addition to making an untenably broad generalization, was echoing Rufus Griswold's 1847 pronouncement that Salmagundi brought an end to the vogue of the Addisonian essay in America, a pronouncement which the material in Chapter Three of the present study has succeeded in at least modifying, one fundamental truth of his observation, at least in regard to Salmagundi, holds especial significance for the material to be discussed in this chapter, for two reasons: first, in its relation to Washington Irving, the outstanding essayist of our period and the central figure of this chapter; second, as a further indication that despite the wide popularity and enormous numbers of the Addisonian essay being written throughout this period, there was among readers increasing dissatisfaction with the often obtrusive and heavily applied "instruction." In consequence, we can observe a slow turning away from the didacticism of the "morals and manners" type of essay and a turning toward the kind of subjectivity which most often characterized the essays of a familiar essayist like Charles Lamb and which we generally look for in the familiar essay. Moreover, with this turn

³ "The Addisonian Essay," pp. 361-364.

toward subjectivity, writers naturally began to talk more of themselves, of things that had happened to them, of their whims and fancies, their speculations and ideas--all these no matter what title was given to the particular essay. And although there is little indication that these American essayists were as familiar with Montaigne as their brother writers were with Addison and Steele, the similarity in tone of certain of their pieces to the thirteen essays in Montaigne's Third Book (1588) cannot be missed.⁴

⁴ In searching selected American periodicals for material for this study, I have found only one commentary of more than passing mention of Montaigne. See the unsigned "An Author's Evenings," Port Folio, 4th Ser., III (March 1817), 249-254: "The pleasure which we derive from the perusal of this merry Gascon is the more singular, because it is not owing to any happy fictions, nor to any continued interest, learned researches, brilliant eloquence, or even exactness of method, that he charms his readers. His book is nothing but a collection of detached thoughts: he seems to abandon himself to all the extravagancies of his imagination; and in wandering from one subject to another, he loses himself in a labyrinth of tales and reveries, without confusing himself, or seeming to care whether the reader follows him. He never read anything but some Latin poets, a few voyages, and his own Seneca and Plutarch. He supported himself upon the works of the latter, appropriating all their beauties, and employing them, with a felicity of selection and a degree of ease and frankness peculiar to himself.

The works of Plutarch are an inexhaustible mine of knowledge. Montaigne has extracted the ore, and accompanied it with beautiful reflections, the result of his own experience. He frequently quotes Plutarch, because he was his favorite author: he speaks often of himself, because it was a subject which he had examined thoroughly, in the conviction that the best manner of studying mankind was to become acquainted with his own feelings, affections and thoughts. The only rule which he seems to have prescribed to himself, is never to speak but of those things which possess extraordinary interest. To this we may ascribe the

The burst of cultural energy which characterized the early years of the nineteenth century in America did not, however sincerely directed, automatically produce a literature of stature. What it did produce, first, was words--thousands of them--so that when British writers tartly asked, "Who reads an American book?" Americans could reply that "whatever the quality of their literature might be, its quantity, all things considered, was impressive. . . ."5 Its second achievement was in theme. Patriotism had demanded a national literature, a literature which "represented" America, so to speak, not only in the fact of its having been produced by American writers living in America but also in that its theme was "American." And the paradox that resulted from American writers penning an American literature while using European, especially British, models seemed to distress only the occasional critic, whose sour disapproval of the practice of publishing pieces by native writers merely because they were American was, anyhow,

energy and vivacity of his expressions, and the gracefulness and originality of his language. His genius possessed that confidence and amiable frankness, which we find among the children of the well born, whose manners have not been constrained by education and the customs of the world. The great freedom with which he writes has given an air of negligence to his style; but it is, nevertheless, highly distinguished for its vigour and its variety. . . ." (pp. 249-250).

5 Howard Mumford Jones, "Salvaging Our Literature," The American Scholar, II (May 1933), 352.

usually buried in the closely printed pages of the Analectic or the North American Review. A third achievement, which is perhaps better termed a most fortunate occurrence, was the rising of two stars of first magnitude amid the welter of mediocrity which had responded to the cry for this literature.

Rising is the proper word: Washington Irving and New York City grew up together. In the year of Irving's birth New York had just begun to recover from the shock of the Revolution and to turn an acquisitive eye toward the more adult centers of business and culture north and south of it. By 1802, the year of Irving's appearance in print under the pseudonym of "Jonathan Oldstyle, Gent.," the city had trebled its population to some 60,000, had established its first cultural society, and, with the state, had become so affluent that it had not "bothered its citizens about taxes since 1800."⁶ When Irving sailed for Europe in 1815 to commence a long stay that was to last until nearly the end of our period, New York had become not only the "great emporium of the American commerce" but also the cultural center of the United States, having outrun Boston, Philadelphia, and Baltimore in practically every statistic.⁷ Consequently, when in 1819-1820 Geoffrey Crayon's Sketch

⁶ D. B. Warden, A Statistical, Political, and Historical Account of the United States of North America. . . . (Edinburgh, 1819), I, 518.

⁷ Warden, I, 545.

Book "first fairly answered the question, 'Who reads an American book?'" not only could America in general point with satisfaction to her first internationally famous literary figure but New York in particular could add the final necessary star to her crown of American leadership.

As Henry Pochmann has pointed out, the fact that Irving had provided in the form of his best book an answer to British sneers at American writing, was also a fortunate occurrence.⁸ For, incontestably, the Sketch Book was Irving's finest book, and, together with Bracebridge Hall and some few selections from others of his volumes, it provides the reason why when reference is made to the American familiar essay, Irving's name is inevitably mentioned first.

Although Salmagundi appeared nearly a decade before the beginning of our period and more than a decade before the Sketch Book, it contains promise of the later Irving--the Irving of the 1820's whose work caused him to be showered with decorative titles honoring his literary reputation. In many ways, Salmagundi, like the pedestrian essays by American Addison discussed in an earlier chapter, echoed the Spectator and Tatler. Yet the differences between the club of Launcelot Langstaff and the numerous "Twig 'Ems" are manifold. As we have seen, American

⁸ Washington Irving, Representative Selections, with Introduction, Bibliography, and Notes (New York, 1934), p. xi. Henceforth cited as Pochmann (AWS).

magazinishs who went to school to Addison had an emphatic interest in social reform, in moralizing, and in the Puritan concern with the relationship of instruction to entertainment. Yet only an occasional one of these writers was able to achieve the deft touch and clever satire of gossip and scandal seen in the Spectator. Their zeal, however earnest, led them to heaviness and turgidity. But the most famous member of the Salmagundi club had keener ears. He professed to "correct the town," but he said it with tongue in cheek while "lolling in [his] elbow-chair . . . insensibly yielding to that genial feeling of indolence the [summer] season is so well fitted to inspire" (II, 70). With William Wizard and Anthony Evergreen he grinned at Addison's "account of himself" and concluded that his own "account" was "nobody's business . . . because if it were, we do not hold ourselves bound to attend to anybody's business but our own; and even that we take the liberty of neglecting when it suits our inclination" (I, 13-14)--an air very like that of the present day New Yorker. Irving solemnly asserted that he was a "moral writer" who had the "good of his fellow-citizens at heart," and who "expected long ere this to have seen a complete reformation in manners and morals. . . ." (II, 74). A few lines later, in words which conjure up for modern Americans the unforgettably lugubrious countenance of Emmett Kelly: "But, well-a-day! to let my readers into a profound secret, the expectations of man are like the varied hues that tinge the distant

prospect--never to be realized--never to be enjoyed but in perspective. Luckless Launcelot, that the humblest of the many air-castles thou hast erected should prove a 'baseless fabric!' Much does it grieve me to confess, that after all our lectures, precepts, and excellent admonitions, the people of New-York are nearly as much given to backsliding and ill-nature as ever" (II, 75).

Even in these few lines it is possible to discern the ease with which Irving wrote, the quality of geniality for which he has been most often mentioned by critics of his style, and the richness of his humor--all of these being qualities for which other Addisonian imitators strove but rarely achieved, and which were already evident in the youthful Irving. It is clear, too, as George Hellman has written, that Irving believed in enjoying life himself and in making life as pleasant as possible for others. He was the proponent of good will, not the exponent of morality. He was an observer, not a teacher; and he cared much more to observe and to enjoy than to teach or to be taught.⁹

Nevertheless Irving early recognized, as Addison had recognized, that humor is often achieved at the expense of someone's--even his own--discomfiture, and certainly he made no effort to avoid satire. When on one occasion Will Wizard "absolutely electrified" his compatriots with an execrable pun which, "had it been a torpedo it could not

⁹ Washington Irving, Esquire (New York, 1925), p. 21.
Henceforth cited as Hellman.

have more discomposed the fraternity," he was "banished from the club" but allowed to return "on his confessing that, like many celebrated wits, he was merely retailing other men's wares. . ." (II, 77). Even as early as 1807, literary thefts had become so annoyingly frequent that "The Age of Plagiarism" had been proposed as a name for the era.

Nor, on another occasion, can its insertion in an otherwise "genial" paragraph deny the point of, "Take my word for it, a little well applied ridicule, like Hannibal's application of vinegar to rocks, will do more with certain hard heads and obdurate hearts than all the logic or demonstrations in Longinus or Euclid" (II, 80). Unlike essayists of lesser caliber, however, Irving does not permit such a sally to distract him for more than a sentence or two; on no occasion does it assume first or even second importance in the essay, and although there are a good many such brief digressions in Salmagundi, by the time of the Sketch Book the more mature Irving had recognized the essential truth of the law of diminishing returns, and had not only learned to limit the number of these shots but also to temper their tone from one of sharpness to one which was half-serious, half-jocular.¹⁰

¹⁰ After 1810, Irving's tone of satire tempered considerably. Nowhere in his later writings is there such a sharp attack as the one made on Jefferson and the anti-Federalists in various portions of Knickerbocker's History (see, for example, Book IV, Chapter VIII).

Like the works of other first-rate essayists in both England and America, Irving's essays display a wide range of subject matter. From "The Art of Book-Making" to "Rural Life in England," from "The Country Church" to "A Sunday in London," and from "John Bull" to "Traits of Indian Character" his interests led him (these, of course, from the two volumes of the Sketch Book alone), and though there is, clearly, some variance in the quality of these pieces--a point to be more fully discussed later in this chapter--the author's facile pen was demonstrably equal to any theme. Yet in spite of the diversity of essay titles--whether he were recounting in "Newstead Abbey" his three-week visit to Byron's ancestral home, or pointing out in "The Country Church" the obvious differences between a truly noble family and a nouveau riche one, or describing in the four essays, "The Stage Coach," "Christmas Eve," "Christmas Day," and "The Christmas Dinner," his first visit to Bracebridge Hall--Washington Irving's familiar essays are in a sense unified by his one especial interest, which pervades every essay regardless of title, of setting, of "influence."

For Irving was above all else fascinated by human beings, and he repeatedly turned to his favorite subject. Like his English contemporaries, Lamb, Hunt, and Hazlitt, Irving the familiar essayist knew that people are first of all interested in themselves and in other people and only secondarily in things. Indeed, things come alive only

when viewed or discussed in relation to the people who had lived in them ("Little Britain"), who had visited or frequented them ("The Boar's Head Tavern, Eastcheap"), or who had experienced them ("Rural Funerals"). Consequently Irving, whose essayist's bag of devices was fuller and more original than any of his American contemporaries', persistently used these devices--the personal anecdote, the biographical sketch, the character, the chance meeting, the vision or dream, the reminiscence, the observation, the tale of a traveler--to relate the what of an essay to the whom. The first essay in the Sketch Book, for example, though it begins with Irving's moody speculations on the "vast space of waters that separates the hemispheres," turns quickly to the device for its human relation: "I said that at sea all is vacancy; I should correct the expression. To one given to day-dreaming, and fond of losing himself in reveries, a sea-voyage is full of subjects for meditation. . . ."¹¹ Through this device Irving "conjures up all that [he] had heard or read of the watery world," observes a distant sail and considers:

How interesting this fragment of a world,
hastening to rejoin the great mass of
existence! What a glorious monument of
human invention; which has in a manner
triumphed over wind and wave; has brought

¹¹ "The Voyage," in The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent. (New York, 1848), I, 8. All references to the Sketch Book are to this "Author's Revised Edition, Two Volumes in One," and are included in the text.

the ends of the world into communion; has established an interchange of blessings, pouring into the sterile region of the north all the luxuries of the south; has diffused the light of knowledge and the charities of cultivated life; and has thus bound together those scattered portions of the human race, between which nature seemed to have thrown an insurmountable barrier (I, 8).

Device follows device. Irving turns next to the anecdote, occasioned by the sight of a wreck. This brief account is told by the captain to the passengers, and that officer's grim story of a shipwreck follows the essayist as he retires to his cabin. When the lookout cries "Land Ho!" the opportunity for still another device presents itself: observation by Irving of the "ships-of-war, that prowled like guardian giants along the coast," and later, "neat cottages, with their trim shrubberies and green grass-plots. I saw the mouldering ruin of an abbey overrun with ivy, and the taper spire of a village church rising from the brow of a neighbouring hill;--all were characteristic of England." And to close the essay, a final device: two brief character sketches, one of the merchant to whom the ship's cargo was consigned, with his "calculating brow and restless air"; and one of a "young woman of humble dress, but interesting demeanor," who sought "to catch a glimpse of some wished-for countenance" among the ship's company.

The point is this: Irving cannot see a ship's sail without considering its significance to mankind; the

lookout's cry means more than land, for land means people and people--English people in this one as in so many of Irving's essays--mean neat cottages, gardens, churches. Even the exciting business of docking the ship is forsworn for a look at two of the throng who are gathered to meet the vessel, and the reader remembers long the brief portrait of the apprehensive girl who utters a faint shriek and stands wringing her hands in silent agony as her husband, one of the ship's crew, is helped ashore, with a "countenance so wasted, so pale, so ghastly. . . ."

"The Voyage," in short, means different things to different people: grief to the young wife, business success to the merchant, exciting experience--a "slice of life"--to the passenger, grim recollection to the captain. And to mankind, it represents at once man's strength, imagination, and inventiveness, and his weakness and insignificance in the face of nature's power.

"The Art of Book-Making" likewise exhibits Irving's interest in people, but here is found more of the subjective Irving, more of Irving's own thoughts and ideas, more reflections of himself rather than his observations of other people. Here too, for the first time in the Sketch Book essays, Irving exhibits his interest in the shadowy grandeur of the past--a theme which had charmed him in Knickerbocker's History and which was to engage his attention in every one of his later writings.

Ostensibly the essay is the result of the author's visit to the reading room of the British Museum (Irving did of course visit the great British library while he was in England) and is an account of the "people" he saw there. The reader soon discerns, however, that the people in the essay are really "characters of virtues and vices"; that they are, like the daydream which occurs later in the essay, devices for essay-writing and not actual people at all. For when the essay is ended, what the reader has gained is closer acquaintance with the ebullient essayist, and only a shadow of anything which could be called of "instructional" value.

In "Book-Making," too, there is a generous portion of the Irving humor, a quality that was missing in "The Voyage." And there is no mistaking the sharp edge which now and then pierces the otherwise comfortable blanket of fun. As he watches "the process of this book manufactory," Irving notices "one bilious-looking wight," who consulted only volumes in black letter while "constructing" some erudite tome; another "dapper little gentleman . . . who had all the appearance of an author on good terms with his bookseller . . . a diligent getter-up of miscellaneous works, which bustled off well with the trade" (I, 116-117). Characters, obviously: the traditional "scholar" and the "cheerful man," as antithetical as Scrooge and Mr. Fezziwig. The two characters offer opportunity for the author's speculations: the bilious scholar produces works

which will be purchased by men who wish to appear learned-- who will place the book in a conspicuous location, open but never read; the dapper pilferer makes "more stir and show of business than any of the others; dipping into various books, fluttering over the leaves of manuscripts, taking a morsel out of one, a morsel out of another . . . here a finger and there a thumb, toe of frog and blind-worm's sting, with his own gossip poured in like 'baboon's blood,' to make the medley 'slab and good'" (I, 117-118).

The device of the daydream is next employed. The essayist tires of watching, rests his head upon a book, gazes at the portraits of ancient authors which decorate the walls, and dozes. While he dozes, he dreams. The authors on the walls come to life and descend "with fury in their eyes to claim their rifled property." Half a dozen old monks attack a modern professor; Beaumont and Fletcher, side by side, rage "round the field like Castor and Pollux; and sturdy Ben Jonson enact[s] more wonders than when a volunteer with the army in Flanders." The dapper pilferer is the center of a hive of claimants as fiercely clustered as "about the dead body of Patroclus." Author after modern author goes "scrambling away in sore affright with half a score of old authors in full cry after him!"

American readers of the 1820's, especially those who, like George P. Morris who edited the New-York Mirror, composed angry letters deploring the rampant plagiarism

of the age,¹² must certainly have hugged themselves with glee while reading "The Art of Book-Making." Irving, too, was obviously enjoying himself while writing the essay, for his own attitude toward the literary thievery of the times is well known.

Yet to leave it at this would be wrongly to interpret Irving as a satirist or polemicist, which he was not. And if the essay had ended with the incident of the modern authors being chased by irate predecessors, despite the humor of the scene, there would perhaps be some grounds for so judging him. But in the essay's final paragraphs Irving deftly turns the sharpness by observing that the affair was so ludicrous that it caused him an "immoderate fit of laughter" which at once woke him from his reverie and also brought him to the attention of a sombre librarian, who coldly requested him to display his admittance card. "At first," concludes Irving, "I did not comprehend him, but I soon found that the library was a kind of literary 'preserve,' subject to game-laws, and that no one must presume to hunt there without special license and permission. In a word, I stood convicted of being an arrant poacher, and was glad to make a precipitate retreat, lest I should have a whole pack of authors let loose upon me" (I,

¹² "TIMOTHY is an unblushing plagiarist. His selection, which he declares to be of his juvenile productions, may be found in Campbell's Pleasures of Hope. We wish to hear no more from him." New-York Mirror, I (July 10, 1824), 399.

124). Thus Irving has at the end of the essay made himself the butt of the joke. It is at his discomfiture the reader chuckles, for by suggestion at least, the essayist has included himself in the company of pilferers and in so doing has made use of the incontestable right of all familiar essayists--the right to poke fun at himself.

The people in these two essays, as well as those in other essays in the Sketch Book--"The Country Church," "John Bull," "The Angler"--are, as has been said, essentially characters. But Irving was not limited to the character, as were the majority of amateur essayists discussed in the previous chapter. There are some real people too--real in E. M. Forster's sense, in that they tend toward roundness rather than flatness, that they "bounce" the reader, and that they to some degree parallel life. Perhaps the best of these are the ones in the four essays which begin the second volume of the Sketch Book.

In the first of these, "The Stage Coach," Irving's own words reinforce the assertion that his primary interest was in people, not in things. In the final essay of the first Sketch Book volume, he had written charmingly about Christmas customs in England, but for the first time in the Sketch Book had not specifically related these customs to people or to characters. His first words in "The Stage Coach," however, point out that the essay "Christmas" had been a kind of preface to the group of essays which were to follow, and that his general observations in the earlier

essay were now to be illustrated "by some anecdotes of a Christmas passed in the country; in perusing which I would most courteously invite my reader to lay aside the austerity of wisdom, and to put on that genuine holiday spirit which is tolerant of folly, and anxious only for amusement" (II, 1-2).

These few words perhaps best illustrate Irving's attitude toward the "instructional" familiar essay that was being written in enormous numbers in the 1820's. As George Hellman has said, Irving was not seeking to teach and to amuse but only to amuse; and if at times, as in "Book-Making," Irving allowed his feelings about plagiarism to occasion some criticism lightly veiled in humor, such was not his usual bent. Only half a dozen of Irving's essays can be called "formal" or "critical" essays. And though as Irving gently and persuasively says here in "The Stage Coach" the same thing Poe was to say sharply and decisively twenty years later, "the masses . . . seeking in this [lighter] literature amusement, are positively offended by instruction,"¹³ it is more often by example than by precept that Geoffrey Crayon "teaches"--if "teaches" is the word. But to return to "The Stage Coach."

The coach is filled with travelers bound for the homes of relatives or friends, and it is driven by a marvellous coachman who immediately attracts Irving's eye. A sketch

¹³ "Tale-Writing--Nathaniel Hawthorne," Godey's Lady's Book, XXXV (November 1847), 253.

of him follows, and the coachman emerges as more than a character. But it is when the coach stops at an inn that Irving meets a former traveling companion, Frank Bracebridge, who immediately invites the writer to spend Christmas holiday at Bracebridge Hall. In the ensuing three essays, "Christmas Eve," "Christmas Day," and "The Christmas Dinner," Frank Bracebridge, Squire Bracebridge, and Master Simon Bracebridge also transcend the impersonality of the character and become as interesting as some of Sterne's companions in A Sentimental Journey. Even the nameless parson of the church near Bracebridge Hall, like Hemingway's older waiter, needs no appellative to be a person, as distinct from a character. And it is in relation to these people that Irving continues his observations of holiday customs. It is in these five essays, also, that Irving's second strength as an essayist comes clearly to view.

Interest in people cannot by itself suffice to make a good familiar essayist, although as we have seen, many an essayist of the period strove mightily to prove it so. But when interest in people and their ways is coupled with a keen eye for observation and an equally keen ear for language to communicate what is observed, an essayist of Irving's stature can emerge. The two, it seems clear, are inseparable for the essayist. Without the good style with which to write of what he sees or thinks, the essayist is at best a stumbling chronicler; lacking observation or idea, he can produce no better than the poor imitation or

the slick article.

Even before Washington Irving appeared in public print, he had demonstrated his "literary" competence in a practical way. While in school under the tutelage of the retired Revolutionary soldier Benjamin Romaine, the young scholar had concluded a bargain with his classmates: they did his arithmetic while he wrote their compositions.¹⁴ In the ephemera that Irving signed "Jonathan Oldstyle, Gent.," brightness and freshness of language have to battle with youthful overwit and other such juvenilia as repetition (see Letter III, in which phrases such as "Here, thought I," "Here, said I," and "Here, I found" are used ad nauseam) and awkward paragraphing (see the same, throughout). In Salmagundi, however, despite the fact that several hands were at work on the various numbers,¹⁵ the mellifluous language of the later Irving is adumbrated.¹⁶

In the Sketch Book, and especially in this series of essays on Christmas at Bracebridge Hall, can be seen with

¹⁴ Hellman, p. 13.

¹⁵ Henry Pochmann points out that Salmagundi was "so truly a mixed dish that the individual authorship of many of the selections is not easily determined. External evidence is scarce, and internal evidence not always conclusive." [Irving, Representative Selections, p. 375.] Professor Pochmann, Professor Williams, and Mr. Hellman have all relied heavily on Pierre Irving's The Life and Letters of Washington Irving, 3 Vols. (New York: Putnam, 1869), especially I, 175-185, for the identification of authorship of the various numbers.

¹⁶ See various passages quoted earlier in these pages.

what effectiveness and felicity of style Irving charmed his readers. To begin with, Irving's vocabulary--a reliable indication of ear--is pictorially evocative, precise in denotation and yet redolent of poetic ambiguity, and rhythmically balanced. In the first part of this essay series Irving writes:

The pitchy gloom without makes the heart dilate on entering the room filled with the glow and warmth of the evening fire. The ruddy blaze diffuses an artificial summer and sunshine through the room, and lights up each countenance in a kindlier welcome. Where does the honest face of hospitality expand into a broader and more cordial smile--where is the shy glance of love more sweetly eloquent--than by the winter fireside? and as the hollow blast of wintry wind rushes through the hall, claps the distant door, whistles about the casement, and rumbles down the chimney, what can be more grateful than that feeling of sober and sheltered security, with which we look round upon the comfortable chamber and the scene of domestic hilarity? (I, 288-289)

The picture of warmth and well-being evoked by this paragraph is due, first, to the words--glow, warmth, sunshine, kindlier, welcome, hospitality, cordial, security, comfortable, and the rest--which attract, reassure, soothe, and delight; the entire scene is deliciously inviting, especially so since these words appeal not only to man's sense of comradeship and belonging but also because they are richly sensuous. The warmth spoken of is not only one of friendship and welcome for the lonely traveler or the extra-family visitor; it is also one of actual temperature in which a

frosty breath no longer clouds and chilled fingers and ears need not be confined in mittens and muffs. And if the reader has read many of Irving's essays and has through them come to "know" his man, he might even add here the more personal picture of rotund Washington backing up gratefully to the fireplace, lifting his tailcoat, and luxuriating in welcome waves of warmth.

Contrast sharpens the picture. The glow of the room is the antithesis of the "pitchy gloom without." There is more warmth within because of the icy weather outside, just as there is security within and potential danger outside. Wintry nature appears almost malevolent, as in Robert Frost's "Snow": it rushes and blasts, claps and whistles and rumbles. But to no avail, for the house is snug and safe. A single word, domestic, adds the final brushstroke. For in its homely sound it possesses all the overtones of security and love and comfort and warmth, of an island of order defiantly resisting a sea of chaos.

Nor is this an isolated example. Irving's sense for the good word is regularly demonstrated throughout the Sketch Book essays. In "The Voyage" a grampus is seen "slowly heaving his huge form above the surface" (I, 8-9), and a shark "darting, like a spectre" (I, 9). "Rural Life in England" portrays deer "trooping in silent herds" and a pheasant "suddenly bursting upon the wing" (I, 95). In "A Royal Poet" Windsor Castle is a "proud old pile" (I, 125) with "long echoing galleries" (I, 126) and "apartments

of faded magnificence, hung with storied tapestry" (I, 127). In other essays an Indian has a "lofty contempt of death" (II, 162), a kingfisher watches an angler "suspiciously from his dry tree" (II, 235), and a "panic-struck frog plumps in headlong" as men approach (II, 235). Even in his most sentimental or flamboyant essays Irving generally escapes "fine writing"--something the myriad magazine essayists rarely learned to do. And those few passages which are overwritten are redeemed by quick return to more effective style:

How many bright eyes grow dim--how many soft cheeks grow pale--how many lovely forms fade away into the tomb, and none can tell the cause that blighted their loveliness! As the dove will clasp its wings to its side, and cover and conceal the arrow that is preying on its vitals, so is it the nature of women to hide from the world the pangs of wounded affection. The love of a delicate female is always shy and silent. Even when fortunate, she scarcely breathes it to herself: but when otherwise, she buries it in the recess of her bosom, and there lets it cower and brood among the ruins of her peace. With her the desire of the heart has failed. The great charm of existence is at an end ("The Broken Heart," I, 105).

Irving's sentence rhythm is artfully conceived and at the same time is conducive to easy reading. In the "Christmas" essays, which as a group might be loosely called narrative essays, the style is one of simple narrative, consisting chiefly of declarative sentences rather in the manner of someone actually relating a story orally

to a group of friends. Moreover, Irving regularly uses the first person, as Lamb does, and when he resorts to the third person, it is commonly for brief descriptions or anecdotes, and the reader never loses touch with the personality of the essayist even though the essayist may be describing a coachman or a cathedral, a good friend or a chance acquaintance. The effective rhythm, the declarative style, and the "personal" third person may be discerned, for example, in this two-paragraph description of the coachman in the second of this group of essays:

He has commonly a broad, full face, curiously mottled with red, as if the blood had been forced by hard feeding into every vessel of the skin; he is swelled into jolly dimensions by frequent potations of malt liquors, and his bulk is still further increased by a multiplicity of coats, in which he is buried like a cauliflower, the upper one reaching to his heels. He wears a broad-brimmed, low-crowned hat; a huge roll of colored handkerchief about his neck, knowingly knotted and tucked in at the bosom; and has in summer-time a large bouquet of flowers in his button-hole; the present, most probably of some enamoured country lass. His waistcoat is commonly of some bright color, striped, and his small-clothes extend far below the knees, to meet a pair of jockey-boots which reach about half way up his legs.

All this costume is maintained with much precision; he has a pride in having his clothes of excellent materials; and, notwithstanding the seeming grossness of his appearance, there is still discernible that neatness and propriety of person, which is almost inherent in an Englishman. He enjoys great consequence and consideration along the road; has frequent conferences with the village housewives, who look upon him as a man of great trust and dependence; and he seems to have a good understanding

with every bright-eyed country lass. The moment he arrives where the horses are to be changed, he throws down the reins with something of an air, and abandons the cattle to the care of the hostler; his duty being merely to drive from one stage to another. When off the box, his hands are thrust into the pockets of his great-coat, and he rolls about the inn-yard with an air of the most absolute lordliness. Here he is generally surrounded by an admiring throng of hostlers, stable-boys, shoe-blacks, and those nameless hangers-on, that infest inns and taverns, and run errands, and do all kinds of odd jobs, for the privilege of battenning on the drippings of the kitchen and the leakage of the tap-room. These all look up to him as to an oracle; treasure up his cant phrases; echo his opinions about horses and other topics of jockey lore; and, above all, endeavor to imitate his air and carriage. Every ragamuffin that has a coat to his back, thrusts his hands in his pockets, rolls in his gait, talks slang, and is an embryo Coachey (II, 4-5).

The balance of the passage is worth careful comment. It begins with a slow-paced movement whose deliberate rhythm is further slowed by sequent adjectives ("broad, full") and adjective phrases ("curiously mottled with red"). As the opening long sentence continues, however, its speed gradually increases so that by the end of it ("the upper one reaching to his heels") the reader's eye is moving along rapidly. The second sentence ("He wears . . . country lass.") repeats the pattern almost exactly, and the last sentence ("His waistcoat . . . his legs.") continues the flow of the second by moving briskly to a close, with the only interruption to its steady movement occurring at the inserted "striped." The significance

of this undulation becomes more apparent when the structure and sense of the paragraph are considered. The first sentence clearly is concerned with the physiognomy of the coachman, beginning with a description of his countenance and ending with a general statement about his "bulk." The second sentence, although closely related and therefore naturally sequent to the first, concerns the coachman's attire only, a discussion prepared for in the first sentence by the phrase "multiplicity of coats." The third sentence, the shortest and most rapidly moving of the paragraph, ends the entire description with three brief mentions: the waistcoat, the small-clothes, and the jockey-boots. The paragraph, in other words, has two distinct parts, and though the parts fit naturally together each is marked by its own gradually accelerating rhythm--such punctuation assisting the reader in both comprehension and in reading ease.

The second of these two paragraphs is not so divided, either in idea or in rhythm. Its central point is the air of the man, revealed in his manner of dress, his gait, his attitude toward and intercourse with people; and though Irving refers to these three points more or less in order, there is no such clear segmentation of this paragraph as in paragraph one. Nor is there, either, any sharp interruption of the rhythm, which flows at medium speed throughout.

Equally evident to the attentive reader is Irving's

consciousness of rhythm in "Stratford-on-Avon." In speaking of the atmosphere which surrounds the tomb of Shakespeare, Irving writes: "His idea pervades the place; the whole pile seems but as his mausoleum. The feelings, no longer checked and thwarted by doubt, here indulge in perfect confidence: other traces of him may be false or dubious, but here is palpable evidence and absolute certainty" (II, 126-127). Yet later in the essay, while chortling at the thought of the great playwright being "had up" for deer-stealing, Irving says: "I have little doubt that, in early life, when running like an unbroken colt about the neighborhood of Stratford, he was to be found in the company of all kinds of odd anomalous characters, that he associated with all the madcaps of the place, and was one of those unlucky urchins, at mention of whom old men shake their heads, and predict that they will one day come to the gallows" (II, 129-130).

The prose rhythms of the two sections are obviously different, each one fitting the tenor of the passage in which it is found. The first is stately in motion, deliberate, marked by regular pauses; the second, despite the affinity of the age for the comma, literally gambols. Of course the use of such words as running, unbroken, and madcaps in the second passage hastens the flow, while in the first passage the words pervade, whole pile, and mausoleum act as slowing agents.

Many more examples might be cited here in support of

the point.¹⁷ Yet it does not seem necessary, for from these and other passages cited earlier in the chapter it is certain that Irving was a conscious, conscientious stylist, aware of the effectiveness in prose of appropriate rhythms and logically conceived paragraphs.

In his essays Irving favored the loose, conversational sentence over the periodic, formal one. Here too, Irving sensed what poorer essayists of his age did not: that the loose or partially loose sentence imparts the easy, familiar tone that makes the familiar essay. Yet Irving was not faultless in this respect. "Rural Funerals" teems with periodics, and it is notable that in this essay Irving falls victim to another error he sometimes committed--that of larding the essay with quotations. In the space of nineteen pages he quotes from Shakespeare (thrice), Herrick (twice), Bourne, Overbury, Beaumont and Fletcher (twice), John Evelyn (thrice), "Corydon's Doleful Knell," Camden's Britannia, Thomas Stanley, Jeremy Taylor (twice), and Bright's Travels in Lower Hungary. Unlike the magazine writers who freighted their brief efforts with even heavier loads of "selections," Irving seemed to recognize his

¹⁷ See for example, the final paragraph of "Christmas Day," which moves rapidly in its description of dancing; the paragraph in "The Art of Book-Making" which races in its description of old authors pursuing modern ones. Conversely, the speech of the old Indian (II, 167) in "Traits of Indian Character" is appropriately slow-moving as it creates an atmosphere of utter despair; slow, too, is the description of the family mansion in "John Bull" (II, 204-205).

fault. Midway in the essay he wrote: "I might crown [sic] my pages with extracts from the older British poets who wrote when these rites were more prevalent, and delighted frequently to allude to them; but I have already quoted more than is necessary" (I, 223-224). But the recognition was in this case quickly forgotten. His next words: "I cannot however refrain from giving a passage from Shakespeare . . ."; and off he went, adding another from the Bard, both quotes from Taylor, and a long quote from Bright. Nevertheless it should be said that Irving is not often guilty of over-citation. Although each selection in the two volumes of the Sketch Book begins, like the numbers of the Spectator and Tatler, with an appropriate quotation chosen from Lyly's Euphues, Burton's Anatomy, Marlowe's Tamburlaine, or other equally famous or less famous source, and although it is rare to find an essay like "A Sunday in London" or "A Country Church" with no quotations in it whatsoever, it is only in "Rural Funerals" and to a lesser degree in "A Royal Poet" that Irving overquotes--a refreshing situation in an age much given to ostentatious display of literary fireworks in the products of both professional and amateur, good and mediocre, writers.

It is for his observant eye and his power to describe accurately and colorfully what he has seen that Irving is

perhaps most regularly praised today.¹⁸ And nowhere in his writings is his receptiveness to sense impressions more easily seen than in his Sketch Book essays. Some indication of this sensitivity can be seen by consulting the examples of his prose given earlier in these pages in connection with his word sense.¹⁹ Perhaps the best selection for this purpose, however, may be found in one essay, "Westminster Abbey," in Volume One of the Sketch Book, in which Irving's acute responsiveness to impressions of sight and sound is marked. Consider this brief paragraph for its sense of color and dimension: "The sun was pouring down a yellow autumnal ray into the square of the cloisters; beaming upon a scanty plot of grass in the centre, and lighting up an angle of the vaulted passage with a kind of dusky splendor. From between the arcades, the eye glanced up to a bit of blue sky or a passing cloud, and beheld the sun-gilt pinnacles of the abbey towering into the azure heaven" (I, 268). Or this one, from the same essay, for its description of sounds:

The sound of casual footsteps had ceased from the abbey. I could only hear, now and then, the distant voice of the priest repeating the evening service, and the faint responses of the choir; these

¹⁸ See, for example, Pochmann (AWS), pp. lx-lxxxiv, especially pp. lxx-lxxi. Also see Diedrich Knickerbocker's History of New York, ed. Stanley T. Williams and Tremain McDowell (New York, 1927), "Introduction."

¹⁹ See above, especially pp. 215-217.

paused for a time, and all was hushed. The stillness, the desertion and obscurity that were gradually prevailing around, gave a deeper and more solemn interest to the place. . . .

Suddenly the notes of the deep-laboring organ burst upon the ear, falling with doubled and redoubled intensity, and rolling, as it were, huge billows of sound. How well do their volume and grandeur accord with this mighty building! With what pomp do they swell through its vast vaults, and breathe their awful harmony through these caves of death, and make the silent sepulchre vocal!--And now they rise in triumph and acclamation, heaving higher and higher their accordant notes, and piling sound on sound.--And now they pause, and the soft voices of the choir break out into sweet gushes of melody; they soar aloft, and warble along the roof, and seem to play about these lofty vaults like the pure airs of heaven. Again the pealing organ heaves its thrilling thunders, compressing air into music, and rolling it forth upon the soul. What long-drawn cadences! What solemn sweeping concords! It grows more and more dense and powerful--it fills the vast pile, and seems to jar the very walls--the air is stunned--the senses are overwhelmed. And now it is winding up in full jubilee--it is rising from the earth to heaven--the very soul seems rapt away and floated upwards on this swelling tide of harmony! (I, 278-280)

In both passages may be seen again Irving's sense of the colorful word and, especially, his sense of language sound and rhythm. No passage of his better illustrates acceleration and crescendo than does this one, and Irving uses every device of prose to heighten the effect. In the beginning, the words of sound are those which denote and connote quietude: footsteps, distant, evening service, faint, hushed, stillness. With startling abruptness the

sound changes. Now the words are suddenly, burst, intensity, billows of sound, swell. And it would seem here difficult further to increase intensity in the face of such words of powerful sound; yet it is done, simply. Irving shifts to the comparative adverb higher and to the technique of redoubling--higher and higher, sound on sound. Then a brief respite, a plateau, so to speak, of con amore evoked by soft voices, sweet gushes, warble, play, pure airs of heaven. Finally Irving is ready for the climax. The choir's sound is lost amid the pealing organ's thrilling thunders; and to further intensify the already enormous volume, the essayist shifts sentence style from rolling, sonorous grandeur to hammer-like shortness, employs the dash rather than the period so that no force is dissipated by too long a pause, and reaches his peak of sound with words well suited to such thunder--stunned, overwhelmed, jubilee--words redolent of the superlative. In the best musical tradition, moreover, the passage does not err by leaving the reader gasping at such clamor but instead gently eases tension at the end by employing a brief coda--"the very soul seems rapt away and floated upwards on this swelling tide of harmony!" And to complement this effect, Irving was sensitive likewise to the effect of the vowel. As the crescendo begins the vowels are predominantly open and round: o (laboring, organ, bellows); a (awful, vaults). As it grows, the vowels shift toward the front and toward thinner, more

piercing ones: sweeping, jubilee.

For Irving's treatment of the senses of taste and smell, various portions of "The Christmas Dinner" are as salivative and scentful as Dickens's description of the Cratchits' plum pudding or Keats's lines in "The Eve of St. Agnes." By the time the reader has vicariously enjoyed Squire Bracebridge's "ancient sirloin," or "pheasant-pie," or "a potation, indeed, that might well make the heart of a toper leap within him; being composed of the richest and raciest wines, highly spiced and sweetened, with roasted apples . . ." (II, 64), he is indeed ready to swallow repeatedly.²⁰

Irving's good ear and encompassing eye, then, combine in his sense for language and acuteness of observation to produce a total effect, an "atmosphere," which other essayists of his era could not match. Like Poe, Irving recognized the importance of atmosphere to the total effect of a piece of writing, and although Poe was unquestionably Irving's master in his ability to evoke atmosphere in the short story, Irving's preeminence in the familiar essay is equally incontestable. In certain ways, in fact, the two writers had much in common. Neither was a waster of words. As Poe in "The Cask of Amontillado" carefully fits each word into the mosaic of his tale, even from the very opening sentence, so does Irving in "The Angler,"

²⁰ See also the description of the Van Tassel table in "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow," Sketch Book, II, 264-265; 281-282.

wherein each item from the eight-line selection from Sir Henry Wotton that serves as headnote to the lines from Izaak Walton that end the essay, has a clear contribution to the total effect of the piece. Even those parts that appear at first sight to be mere ramblings, digressions, or idle thoughts--the type of thing so dear to the familiar essayist--are in no way loose but are meticulously woven into the fabric of the essay. In this way Irving's seemingly irrelevant opening speculations about the unlucky urchin who has run away to sea, are indeed relevant to the anecdote of the veteran angler and his two rustic disciples which appears as a device later in the essay.

In their power to build climax and heighten tension certain of Irving's pieces do not suffer when compared to Poe's. The selection from "Westminster Abbey" cited earlier in this chapter can for its control of sound intensity be placed beside the equally effective passage which brings "The Tell-Tale Heart" to a shattering denouement, or beside the scene of mounting excitement in "The Fall of the House of Usher" as Madeline approaches Roderick's door. It is true that a more valid comparison would employ Irving's fiction rather than his essays: "The Spectre Bridegroom," "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow," or some of the gothic selections from The Alhambra might serve well here. But that is beside the point.

What is important is that Irving's style, sense of language, and powers of observation and description be

resurrected from their "state of embalmed excellence," as Professor Stanley T. Williams puts it,²¹ and be recognized for what they are---the meticulously constructed, earnestly worked over, thoroughly effective efforts in prose of a man whose personal literary standards were so surpassingly high as to cause him to destroy as unworthy sufficient numbers of his essays to have filled two more Sketch Books.²²

The Knickerbocker Essayists: Contemporaries of Irving and Contributors to the New-York Mirror. After the publication of the Sketch Book in 1819-1820 and, more important, after these two volumes had been praised in Blackwood's and the Edinburgh by reviewers ordinarily hostile to products of American pens, Irving's literary star rose rapidly on both sides of the Atlantic. By 1824, with Bracebridge

²¹ The Life of Washington Irving (New York, 1935), II, 102. Henceforth cited as Williams.

²² Hellman, pp. 168-170. Although Irving and his work have never been out of favor with scholars in American literature, in the last three decades an Irving "revival" has been in progress. A primary cause for this, certainly, was the appearance in 1935 of Professor Williams' definitive biography--the high point of ten years of Irving scholarship which saw into print Irving's Journals, Notes While Preparing the Sketch Book, George Hellman's Washington Irving, Esquire, the standard bibliography, still not superseded, and dozens of articles. Yet in all of this work no thorough analysis has been made of Irving's style. Most of these scholars, including Professor Williams, Irving's staunchest defender, remark at Irving's lack of imagination and thinness of intellect, and declare that Irving's writing will not bear close analysis.

Hall and Tales of a Traveller also having been issued, the name of Geoffrey Crayon had become a subject for debate--by some people Walter Scott was thought to be the author of the Sketch Book;²³ a name ready for lionizing--even poor reviews of Tales of a Traveller pointed out that although the new book did not approach the standards set in the Sketch Book and Bracebridge Hall it was still an example of the "purest style";²⁴ and, significant to this study especially, a name already a favorite among American periodical editors--who found that the name of Washington Irving or "Geoffrey Crayon" possessed strong magic.

First, for the journal operators Irving's name provided, primarily in the form of laudatory reviews of his works by the best known English periodicals, a weapon with which they could enter the lists against English deprecators of American literature. They gleefully "extracted" from Lockhart's review of the Sketch Book the most commendatory paragraphs and reprinted them with appropriately smug additions--being careful, for once, to acknowledge the source as BLACKWOOD'S (in capitals). Or they chose sections from Jeffrey's estimate in the Edinburgh, or from the unsigned but highly complimentary review in the Revue Encyclopedique, or from the articles in the London Magazine or the Quarterly

²³ Hellman, p. 107.

²⁴ The Minerva, I n.s. (September 18, 1824), 380-381.

Review. Of course, American editors had a favorite target: among the remarks made by Englishmen who sneered at American literature none had struck so deep as Sidney Smith's caustic "Who reads an American book?" It is not surprising, therefore, to find in American periodicals of the 1820's replies borrowed from English magazines to "fairly answer this saucy question." What is surprising is to note the staying power of the remark, for nearly forty years later it still rankled sufficiently to occasion regular and sometimes lengthy retorts.²⁵

Second, editors en masse turned to all three of Irving's recent works, the Sketch Book, Bracebridge Hall, and Tales of a Traveller, for material for their magazine columns. To begin with, these three books lent themselves readily to "selection"; whatever labels editors gave to the parts chosen from these works--sketches, tales, essays, pieces, stories, reflections, musings, beautiful extracts--the portions were ideal for magazine reprinting because they were short, they were eminently readable even for inexperienced readers, they were "approved by the best authorities," and they were refreshingly different in style and quality from the general run of turgid excerpts

²⁵ See my article, "The Famous Boston Post List: Mid-Nineteenth Century American Bestsellers," Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America, LII (Second Quarter, 1958), 93-110. Note, too, that even N. P. Willis's kind words about Smith in one of his "Pencillings" failed to assuage the feeling of enmity held by American writers and editors toward the sour critic: New-York Mirror, IX (May 5, 1832), 348.

which then freighted the pages of most general magazines. It is not an exaggeration to say that every general magazine of the era found room for parts of these three Irving works (later in the period, selections from Conquest of Granada, The Alhambra, and Life and Voyages of Columbus are common, and of course, earlier in the period Salmagundi and Knickerbocker's History were excerpted, but not as often). Certain of these magazines should be mentioned, however, as notable Irving partisans. First among these, as already noted by Stanley T. Williams, George Hellman, and Henry A. Pochmann, were the New-York Mirror and, earlier, the Analectic. There was, too, the Knickerbocker; but, as will be shown, in the early years of its existence the periodical named for Irving's Dutchman had some difficulties with its unwilling godfather. Others, not yet noted by scholars, were the American Athenaeum of New York City and the Boston Telegraph (a newspaper).

In its first volume the Athenaeum praised Irving in an evaluative article on "American Literature," May 19, 1825; ran a two-part brief "biographical and critical" portrait on May 26 and June 2; several times alluded to the "genial Geoffrey Crayon" in the series of twelve unsigned essays, "Le Moulinet," which ran almost weekly from May 12 through August 4; and reprinted within this same time span two sketches from Bracebridge Hall. The Boston Telegraph discovered Irving a year earlier. This newspaper

"selected" from the Sketch Book on February 12, 1824; again on February 19, when it also printed a long review of the new Salmagundi (the work of Paulding, of course, but Irving is nonetheless highly praised) in which Irving is said to "possess the most exquisite taste of any author in any age or nation that we know"; on April 8, the original Blackwood's review of the Sketch Book is reprinted; on June 24, a similar article of praise from the Revue Encyclopedique; and various "elegant extracts," mainly portions of stories from Tales of a Traveller and essays from the Sketch Book, are printed almost weekly.

A third indication of the magic of Irving's name was the frequency with which notices of Geoffrey Crayon or "the author of the Sketch Book" appeared in editorial columns, "Addresses to Readers" sections, "Doings About Town" departments, and various otherwise named repositories of soufflé and suet. His goings and comings on the continent and in England are regularly commented on, his attendance at social functions is noted, and his visits to the homes of English men of letters are reported. Bits of Irving biography; anecdotes in which Irving has a role or which he is supposed to have told; notices of new editions of Irving works, particularly of "illustrated" or "handsomely bound" or "revised by the author especially for . . ." editions; speeches, letters, conversations--the list is endless and, for the most part, composed of inconsequential squibs which have significance only as a

total group to illustrate public and editorial interest in the activities of America's first famous writer.²⁶

Now and then a single notice holds some special interest. One such appeared in the Rural Repository (Hudson, New York) on August 7, 1824: "Mr. Murray, book seller, of London, has given Washington Irving 1500 pounds sterling for the copy right of his new novel" (I, 39). Although the accuracy of the figure is open to question, such a notice so early in Irving's career gives further indication of his financial as well as literary success. The novel spoken of but not named is doubtless the abortive Rosalie, which Irving worked at sporadically in the early 1820's but finally laid aside unfinished.

That a writer so popular with readers and editors should attract a following among writers seems inevitable. And Irving did attract a following, but for other reasons as well as his popularity. There was a ready market for whatever Geoffrey Crayon wrote, to be sure, bringing him financial as well as literary success. Such a condition encouraged other writers to produce, in hopes that they too could succeed. Irving's style, subject matter, form, and devices were as conducive to imitation as Addison's

²⁶ See, for example, the New-York Mirror, IX (August 13, 1831), 47: "It is currently reported that Washington Irving intends returning to this city in the course of the ensuing spring. Few events could be more gratifying to our fellow-citizens, who are justly proud of him, and grateful for his successful exertions in elevating the literary reputation of his country."

had been, and with American columns of print clamoring for brief efforts by American writers, there was a better-than-even chance that the work even of inexperienced or "occasional" writers would be accepted. In some vague way, too, Irving's well known geniality--his warmth, discernible in his writing, and his, therefore, approachableness--must have had some effect as an indirectly encouraging force.²⁷ Whatever the final reason or complex of reasons, a group of Irving followers had begun to form early in the 1820's.

The term "Irving followers" needs clarification. It is, first, properly ambiguous. Some of Irving's better contemporaries borrowed from Salmagundi, the Sketch Book, and Bracebridge Hall as freely as the amateur magazinists "extracted" from the Spectator, Tatler, and Citizen of the World; and like these magazinists, sometimes they acknowledged the source of their borrowings and sometimes not. Others of these essayists composed a sort of Irving cheering section; while these men did not borrow from Geoffrey Crayon, they omitted no opportunity to laud America's first writer by constant reference to him and his work; often too, they leaped to a defense of Irving

²⁷ See, for example, the comment by the editors of the New-York Mirror [IX (August 13, 1831), 47] in their "Conversations of the Week" column praising Irving. They conclude: "Mr. Irving has indeed run a brilliant career, and every one here feels toward him like a bosom friend" [*italics mine*].

whenever he was attacked, innocently rationalizing that since he was in Europe and therefore not able himself to answer immediately the few denigrations, he needed champions on the scene. Still other essayists basked in Irving's literary light by becoming contributors to a magazine which printed Irving's work, which was unmistakably pro-Irving in its reviews of his writings and in its frequent attention to his public affairs, and which would brook no opposition to Irving's position as the leading American literary figure. Thus, this latter group became "Irving followers" through association with the New-York Mirror--the periodical which filled these requirements better than any other periodical of the era in the New York City area and which between 1823 and 1841 gathered into its columns every one of the "Minor Knickerbockers" as a "regular" or an "exclusive" contributor.²⁸

The importance of the New-York Mirror to the Knickerbocker writers should not be underestimated. As has been said earlier in these pages, it was a magazine of high prestige in the 1820's and '30's--one whose influence reached beyond the New York area even into New England and its center, Boston, and as far west as Cincinnati. It is

²⁸ New-York Mirror, IX (October 1, 1831), 103: "We take this opportunity to express our thanks to the Author [of "Haschbasch, the Pearl Diver" (Paulding)] for the exclusive preference he has shown in making this journal the channel through which the free-will offerings of his leisure hours are given to the public."

not an exaggeration to say that every American writer of note during this period contributed to the Mirror at least once--a fact readily proved by leafing through any series of issues from 1823 to 1841. Nor do we have to search far to find the reasons for this. First was its Irving partisanship, which was both politic and sensible. Second was its editorial caliber under George Morris and Samuel Woodworth, and later including Theodore Sedgwick Fay and Nathaniel P. Willis, which was clearly superior to that of most periodicals'; exceptions would include Joseph and Edwin Buckingham's New-England Magazine (after 1831), the earlier Analectic and Port Folio, and the Knickerbocker (after 1833). Third was its more solidly based financial position: whereas other periodicals began on a shoestring and struggled ineffectually to shoulder the economic burdens of publishing and collecting subscription monies, the Mirror had from the beginning the advantages of Samuel Woodworth's ample funds and George Morris's not inconsequential savings--money which apparently was never needed, for if we may judge by the absence in the Mirror's pages of continuous series of impassioned pleas to subscribers to remit, as appear regularly in other periodicals, the magazine experienced no serious financial crisis even in its first year.²⁹ These reasons,

²⁹ At the beginning and end of each volume, there are of course the usual notices that subscriptions are due. But these are not repeated in each weekly issue nor is their tone so supplicatory as the usual pleas in other periodicals.

together with the indefatigable efforts and personal prestige of Morris and Woodworth, attracted the better literary craftsmen--Halleck, Bryant, Paulding--who in turn attracted others of equal or nearly equal reputation until the names of the contributors compose a list which reads today like a literary history of the period.

The Mirror was not shy about calling attention to its famous family. In addition to its regular comment on Irving's activities it carried, for example, notices of Paulding's new play;³⁰ Henry Megarey's travel books and essay collections;³¹ N. P. Willis's editorial work;³² and Samuel Knapp's essays on American literature;³³ and it mentioned in each notice that the Mirror was the "regular repository" of each author's "desultory pieces." Whenever the Mirror's judgment of an author's stature was vindicated by later acceptance by other critics, due notice of the parent magazine's perspicacity inevitably saw print.³⁴ But certainly the most obvious example of the Mirror's self-advertisement took the form of a lengthy closet drama, "The Ninth Anniversary," which was written by a contributor who needlessly professed his sincere regard for the magazine

³⁰ IX (October 1, 1831), 102.

³¹ I (November 15, 1823), 124.

³² IX (September 3, 1831), 79.

³³ IX (August 13, 1831), 47.

³⁴ See, for example, the article on Paulding's The Dutchman's Fireside, IX (August 20, 1831), 55.

while weaving into several hundred lines of trochaic tetrameter the names of every contributor to the Mirror. An execrable imitation of the witches' first scene in Act One of Macbeth and of portions of Milton's "L'Allegro," the verse is sheer doggerel. But from the standpoint of gathering together in one list the names of the Mirror's contributors it has bibliographical and historical interest enough to require mention.³⁵

James Kirke Paulding. Among Irving's contemporaries perhaps the most familiar to modern American literature scholars is James Kirke Paulding, who was one of the collaborators in Salmagundi and who is probably best known today as one of the "lads who made merry at Cockloft Hall" and as the author of The Diverting History of John Bull and Brother Jonathan (1812) and Köningsmark (1823). Certainly of the group Paulding was the most versatile author, for he tried his hand at every form of belles-lettres with moderate success.³⁶ Novelist, critic,

³⁵ This entire poem has been included in photostat as Appendix A to this study.

³⁶ In poetry Paulding published The Lay of the Scottish Fiddle (1813), a verse parody of Sir Walter Scott; The Backwoodsman (1818), a long narrative and descriptive poem; he contributed more than a dozen short poems to the Analectic, the New York Evening Post, and the New-York Mirror; and he wrote a good deal of verse which did not see print until William I. Paulding included it in his Literary Life of James K. Paulding (1867).

Five novels, Köningsmark (1823), The Dutchman's Fireside (1831), Westward Ho! (1832), The Old Continental (1846), and The Puritan and His Daughter (1849), constitute

poet, writer of tales and "sketches," letter writer, playwright, biographer, historian, satirist--all of these designations have been assigned him, with some justification, by one or another of Paulding's admirers or biographers. Yet in spite of William Paulding's statement in 1867 that his father was "by nature an essayist, and, of all men, wrote most directly out of his own experience, observation, or reflection," James Kirke Paulding has not been known as an essayist.³⁷ Neither have his essays been the subject of a thorough examination.³⁸

Admittedly, Paulding does not deserve to be known

Paulding's work in longer fiction. The Bucktails; or, Americans in England (written before 1830 but published in American Comedies in 1847) and The Lion of the West (not published but produced by J. H. Hackett in 1831) were his dramas.

A Life of Washington (1835) was Paulding's single extended effort at biography, although he wrote several fair-sized biographical articles on public figures, such as those on Andrew Jackson (for the Democratic Review) and John Randolph (published in the revised edition of Letters from the South in 1835). The Merry Tales of the Three Wise Men of Gotham (1826) and John Bull in America (1825) contain satire, stories, the inevitable and difficult to classify "sketches," and some essays. And of course Paulding made numerous contributions of short stories, sketches, essays, articles, and poems to the periodicals and annuals of the era.

³⁷ William I. Paulding, Literary Life of James K. Paulding (New York, 1867), p. v. Henceforth cited as Literary Life.

³⁸ In his James Kirke Paulding, Versatile American (New York, 1926), Amos L. Herold devotes little space to this portion of Paulding's work. There is brief comment on Salmagundi (see especially pp. 29-38), and briefer comment on Salmagundi, Second Series (pp. 59-61); and Herold dismisses New Mirror for Travellers as "so hasty and inconsequential that it may be passed without comment" (p. 114).

primarily as a familiar essayist. In all, he wrote perhaps sixty or seventy short pieces which may be called familiar essays, but this total represents only a small part of his total work. Forty of these were in the form of "letter-essays" and were collected in the two-volume Letters from the South (1817); New Mirror for Travellers; and Guide to the Springs (1828) is, like his John Bull and Brother Jonathan, primarily composed of satirical chapters on American and British manners and customs, attacks on English reviewers, caustic lampoons of British travellers, and ironical comments on Americans who "take the waters" at Saratoga and Ballston. These volumes do contain familiar essays, however, and even if they did not they should have mention here if only because they have somewhat unjustly been passed over by earlier writers on Paulding. And of course, Paulding's contributions to Salmagundi and his authorship of Salmagundi, Second Series need comment.

Born five years earlier than Washington Irving, Paulding made his first "specific and complete effort" at literature in 1799: the poem "Dawn in the Highlands of the Hudson," an eighteen-stanza apostrophe to the beauties of external nature, very like the weekly efforts of the myriad "Philos," "Clios," and "Floras" which filled the periodical columns with cloying Della Cruscanisms.³⁹ Happily, despite its early date of composition, the poem was not published

³⁹ Literary Life, pp. 30-33.

until more than half a century later, by which time Paulding's literary reputation had been firmly established and he could afford to have this bit appear as part of his juvenilia.

Like Washington Irving, Paulding first appeared in print in the columns of Peter Irving's Morning Chronicle in 1802; and for the next five years, or until the appearance of the first Salmagundi paper, "the embryo author employed himself . . . in writing for the newspapers, and jotting down memoranda. . . ." ⁴⁰ But Salmagundi, paradoxically enough as will be seen, provided Paulding with his first real success in literature and also 'opened the way for perhaps his worst failure.

Just how much of "Old Sal" Paulding wrote is even today an unsolved problem. Indeed, among the students and biographers of the Irvings and Paulding, only one clear point of agreement on this subject emerges: that of the three authors of Salmagundi, William Irving was responsible for the poetry of the magazine. ⁴¹ The prose, however, may not so easily be attributed to distinct authorship. Pierre Irving's estimate, in general terms, claims for his uncle slightly more than half of the writing. William Paulding asserts that to assign either author specific portions is

⁴⁰ Literary Life, p. 34.

⁴¹ Williams, II, 271; Literary Life, pp. 35-41; Pierre M. Irving, Life and Letters of Washington Irving (New York, 1862-64), I, 176-180.

difficult because "the allies never chose to separate their interest in the articles."⁴² Henry A. Pochmann agrees with William Paulding: "Salmagundi is so truly a mixed dish that the individual authorship . . . is not easily determined. External evidence is scarce, and internal evidence not always conclusive."⁴³ And Amos Herold, understandably, follows William Paulding in optimistically claiming for James Kirke Paulding nearly half of the total Salmagundi.⁴⁴ The most thorough and at the same time most recent discussion of the problem, that by Stanley T. Williams in The Life of Washington Irving, concludes that approximately two-thirds of the prose was by Irving and that even in the six essays attributed to Paulding (I, III, VIII, IX, XI, XII) Washington Irving may have had some hand.⁴⁵ Kendall Taft's more recent volume, Minor Knickerbockers,⁴⁶ does not attempt to deal with the problem but instead refers the reader to Professor William's Irving.

Since the best modern evidence,⁴⁷ then, supports

⁴² Literary Life, p. 39.

⁴³ Pochmann (AWS), p. 375.

⁴⁴ Herold, pp. 34-35.

⁴⁵ Williams, II, 267-273.

⁴⁶ New York, 1947, p. 378.

⁴⁷ Even in 1832, the "trio of Salmagundi" excited speculation about precise authorship. The New-York Mirror remarked: "In a late notice of Washington Irving, we stated that the papers for Salmagundi were written by a circle of literary gentlemen. It struck us that a closer inquiry into this subject would not be uninteresting, and we have

Washington Irving as the principal author of the first Salmagundi, and since even those parts of the work attributed to Paulding appear to bear the mark of Irving's helping hand, it is ironic that what reputation Paulding does have as an essayist should rest so strongly on the papers in "Old Sal"--papers he could claim only little responsibility for. Moreover, the relative failure of Salmagundi, Second Series, which Paulding undertook to write by himself while Irving was in Europe, seems only to heighten the irony. Justifiably, then, since a careful re-reading of the original Salmagundi and of the evidence presented by other scholars offers no new argument,⁴⁸ we may turn to Letters from the South (1817) as Paulding's first collection of essays.⁴⁹

accordingly ascertained precisely the authors of that popular publication, a point, by the way, which has been the subject of many contradictory opinions. All the poetry, and two of the prose articles, were from the hand of William Irving; the rest were furnished, in about equal parts, by Washington Irving and James K. Paulding. A correspondent asserts that Dr. Peter Irving was a contributor. This idea has no foundation whatever in truth" [IX (March 17, 1832), 295].

⁴⁸ Kendall Taft asserts that Paulding's collaboration with William and Washington Irving in Salmagundi was "much more important" in the launching of Paulding's literary career than were his contributions to Peter Irving's Morning Chronicle. This is clearly so. But Taft seems to imply that Paulding had more to do with Salmagundi than Professor Williams's evidence indicates, and yet Taft refers the reader to Professor Williams's work without presenting any additional evidence (Minor Knickerbockers, p. 12).

⁴⁹ References to Letters from the South will appear in the text.

In July 1816, Paulding began a tour through Virginia, visiting among other places Williamsburg, Warm Springs, White Springs, Natural Bridge, Berkeley Springs, and Harper's Ferry, and he recorded his impressions of persons and places in forty "letters." A few of these, although they bear the surface features of the familiar essay, are better described as articles, resembling the newsy "column" written today for a local newspaper of limited circulation. Letter II, for example, Paulding calls an "occasional sketch of 'Ould Virginia'" in which he loosely mixes bits of history (John Smith, Pocahontas, John Rolfe, Powhatan, the settlement of Jamestown) and some comments on and quotes from Captain John Smith's seventeenth-century account of Virginia. Letter III continues in the same vein, discussing the reasons for settlement of various parts of Virginia and describing the external features of and some of the activities on a plantation at which he spent a day. Even though here Paulding describes the plantation owner and his daughter, it is done quite perfunctorily in the same matter-of-fact tone that characterizes both of these "letters."

Letter IV, however, is a true familiar essay. Here Paulding begins: "One of the first things that strikes a Northern man, who flounders into Virginia, or either of the more southern states, loaded with a pack of prejudices as large as a pedlar's, is, that he has, all life long, been under a very mistaken notion of the state of their manners. So, at least, it fared with me. . ." (I, 31). And the essay

keeps the promise here implied. It is, by and large, the author's subjective comment: how he feels about things he sees, what he thinks about amor patria, his recollections of things he has read, his opinions of "honest John Bull, who, from time immemorial, has believed that his neighbours, the French, eat frogs, and are destitute of religion . . ." (I, 34-35). For a device he resorts to a chance meeting with "Oliver B--", who, you may remember, was expelled from the College [Columbia], for taking such unwarrantable freedoms with the venerable classics. . . ." (I, 36). Oliver agrees to accompany Paulding, "and we accordingly set forth on horseback, carrying our plunder (as the Virginians call baggage) in a light Jersey wagon" (I, 38). A brief account of the good women along the road who take the two men for traveling salesmen ends the essay on an appropriately light note, and for the first time in the collection of essays the reader begins to feel some kinship with the author--that the author is a man who feels and thinks and responds and not that he is an impersonal wielder of pen who has merely collected and organized some data.

Letter V almost loses the familiar essay quality in its impersonal, school-teacherish lecture on Chesapeake Bay and environs which begins the piece. But after several paragraphs, Paulding returns to his personal tone in reflections engendered by the sight of the city of Richmond, in recollections of more schoolfellows, H-- and D--, and in a light digression which begins: "I am however one of

those who, like honest Candide, think all things happen for the best, and that this is the best of all possible worlds" (I, 51).

And on the Letters go. Letter VI describes "York-Town" and digresses long enough to deplore the small attention given to "Classical Literature and Belles Lettres in our colleges," the vices of small towns, and an odd tavern at Williamsburg (I, 59-75). In VII, which Paulding terms a "true travelling letter," there is opportunity for remarks on young nations which, "like young children, seem destined to endure certain diseases before their constitutions can be said to be well established," and on the progress of population in the United States (I, 77-88). The contest between great cities such as New York and Philadelphia, "for ever disputing the palm of fashion, science, literature, fine arts, 'and all that sort of thing'," is likened, in Letter VIII, to the contest between two rival ladies for the "supreme dominion over a little country town" (I, 89-97), while in Letter IX, Indian names of rivers, Paulding's purchase of a new horse, and the ascent of the Blue Ridge Mountains vie for the reader's attention (I, 99-106).

Further particularization here of the material in the forty letters would be mere pedantry, especially since there are no striking variations in style, quality, or subject matter throughout the remaining letters in the two volumes. Roughly speaking, they are familiar essays, even though certain ones (I, II, III, XXXIII, XXXIX), because of

their tone and subject matter, are poor examples. Paulding himself wrote Washington Irving on April 5, 1818, that Letters from the South was partly "some recollections of a tour made the summer before in Virginia, and partly fictitious, which I believe is popular enough. . . ." ⁵⁰ And William Paulding calls the letters "disquisitions about any thing that chanced to come into [James Kirke Paulding's] head, dainty little pictures of nature, anecdotes or short stories touched off with a careless but striking grace, together with some details of manners and customs. . . ." ⁵¹

Although Letters from the South occasionally turned to observation of people and customs and to some social satire, the two volumes of "letters" are distinctly different in manner, quality, and subject matter from the essays Paulding wrote in the later Salmagundi, Second Series. ⁵² In May 1819, not knowing that Washington Irving was at that moment

⁵⁰ Literary Life, p. 79.

⁵¹ Literary Life, p. 79.

⁵² Herold sums up Letters from the South thus: "Though less well known and less rich in detail than Timothy Dwight's contemporary Travels in New England and New York, or Jefferson's earlier Notes on the State of Virginia, yet Paulding's Letters from the South belong in the same class. Dwight is more concrete and voluminous; Jefferson, more exact and scholarly. In the main, Paulding's letters are discursive essays and descriptions of natural scenes, with little narration. Though based on limited observation and unduly drawn out into two volumes, these essay-letters, patriotically conceived and honestly written, will be increasingly valuable as a record of travel in the South in 1816, as an interpretation of national movements and dangers, and as a partial statement of Paulding's social and literary opinions" (p. 58).

preparing the first number of the Sketch Book for appearance in June 1819, Paulding began a second series of Salmagundi essays. As he explained himself in a letter to Irving, he was finding leisure time "a little heavy" and so decided to attempt a "continuation of our old joint production."⁵³

Unfortunately for Paulding, neither the majority of the critics nor the readers of Salmagundi, Second Series gave it a good reception. There were, of course, the Paulding partisans, and they wrote accolades.⁵⁴ But they were few. In the same January 1820 letter in which Paulding explained to Irving how the new Salmagundi had begun, he sighed: "I shall discontinue it shortly, as I begin to grow tired, and I believe the public has got the start of me."⁵⁵ Evidently Paulding had read too many of the denigratory statements which had appeared since the publication of his first number eight months earlier. A letter from Washington Irving to Henry Brevoort in March 1820, just three months after Paulding's note to Irving, provides a clear picture of the situation. Wrote Irving: "There seems to be a pitiful and illiberal spirit indulged towards [Paulding] by the writers in our reviews and

⁵³ Quoted in Literary Life, p. 117.

⁵⁴ See, for example, notices in the Knickerbocker, V (February 1835), 169-170, and in the New-York Mirror, IX (August 20, 1831), 55.

⁵⁵ Literary Life, p. 118.

newspapers. What is the state of our literature that it can afford to treat with slight and contumely such a writer as Paulding. . . ."⁵⁶ And even Evert Duyckinck, who was a strong Paulding supporter, referred to Salmagundi, Second Series as a "dangerous undertaking" which did not "compare favorably" to the earlier work of the same name, and he speculated that perhaps William and Washington Irving had by their absence from the Second Series left too much of the burden on the shoulders of their old associate.⁵⁷

Despite its poor reception by contemporaries, however, Salmagundi, Second Series must be adjudged superior, from the viewpoint of style, manner, tone, and subject matter of the familiar essay, to the Letters from the South. The first seven numbers satirize high society, false taste, luxurious living, and dandies and coquettes, and are thus like the essays of social criticism in the first Salmagundi. However, a decided difference in tone is immediately noticeable. In the earlier work the social criticism was often amusing, always playful; in the Second Series it is as often humorous but always irritatingly sharp. And this difference in tone, moreover, is characteristic of Paulding's essays in general when compared to Irving's. Where Irving was ebullient, Paulding was

⁵⁶ Letters of Washington Irving to Henry Brevoort, ed. George S. Hellman (New York, 1918), pp. 335-336. Quoted in Herold, p. 61.

⁵⁷ "Editor's Preface," Salmagundi. . . . (New York, 1869), pp. vii-viii. Quoted in Literary Life, pp. 116-117.

restrained; where Irving would as soon include himself in his half-jocose, half-serious criticisms of contemporary customs, as in the case of the modern writers running for their lives with "old authors" in furious pursuit, Paulding would caustically deride his "sagacious brethren [who] generally buy books by the square foot"; where Irving gently insisted that American critics must "guard particularly against" answering sallies by British authors with "ill-judged" recriminations, Paulding scornfully called England "our kind, gentle, considerate old mamma" who expends large sums in sending dolts on journeys only to have them tell us "through a score of huge quartos" of their "divers sins of ignorance, prejudice, and malignity."⁵⁸

Another difference between Irving and Paulding occurs in their subject matter. A satirist by preference, Paulding sought out contemporary follies and lashed them unremittingly. Painless methods of education without study, lotteries, unnecessary street improvements, and mistaken philanthropies feel the acid of his attack in Salmagundi; Second Series; and although the pleasures of country life, two or three entertaining character sketches, and a humorous, non-satirical account of the cross-breeding experiments of a Dutchman are ameliorating factors, the final effect of Salmagundi, Second Series is indicative of

⁵⁸ New Mirror for Travellers; and Guide to the Springs (New York, 1828), p. 79.

Paulding's real strength as an essayist--that of a tireless, acidulous social critic, closer to Swift than to Addison.

New Mirror for Travellers; and Guide to the Springs further demonstrates Paulding's sharpness. William Paulding called it a "quiz of the fashions and manners of that day . . .; rather a series of satirical observations varied with brief essays or stories than a connected work."⁵⁹ Yet such a general statement hardly does the book justice, for in spite of Amos Herold's dismissal of New Mirror as being "so hasty and inconsequential that it may be passed without comment," the book holds much of interest to the student of this era in America.⁶⁰

In form it is hardly an essay, as William Paulding pointed out; it is better described as a loosely connected series of satirical observations on travelers to New York, fashions and music in Gotham, social events, eating places, occupations, John Bull and Brother Jonathan again, and numerous other things. The last hundred pages comprise the Guide to the Springs portion. These pages are not clearly separated from the New Mirror portion but are essentially an addition in which, rather as an afterthought or attempt at stretching out the narrative, Paulding lampoons

⁵⁹ Literary Life, p. 216; A Book of Vagaries; Comprising the New Mirror for Travellers and Other Whim-Whams . . ., ed. William I. Paulding (New York, 1868), p. vii.

⁶⁰ p. 114.

the people and customs of Ballston and Saratoga Springs.⁶¹

To begin the book Paulding discusses the traveling habits of both native Americans and English visitors, asserting that it is "high time . . . that the wandering Arabs of the west should have a code of laws, and regulations for their especial government. . . ." To supply this "desideratum," he concludes, "is the principal design of the present work."⁶² As a device Paulding assumes the guise of a cicerone, and in the first few pages sets the pattern for the entire book. Wall Street absorbs the first blow: it "labours under a sort of shadow of suspicion" (p. 10). Then Paulding sneers at the paradox of New York morality: "There are . . . one hundred churches, and about as many lottery offices, which accounts for the people of New York being so much better than their neighbours" (p. 11). And he rails inconsistently at the English visitors who blindly praise New York not for its cultural opportunities but for its devotion to the advancement of science of gastronomy (pp. 11-14).

Another device, the fictitious letter, provides the author with the opportunity of including anecdotes which are on the whole livelier than the other portions of the book and serve to brighten its sometimes dull character.

⁶¹ In the "Introduction" to A Book of Vagaries, William Paulding remarked at his father's detestation of watering places (p. ix).

⁶² Preface, pp. 5-6.

Some of these "letters," too, are vehicles for Paulding's sharpest lunges at English critics of things American. Never mind what John Bull says of you, admonishes Paulding in one of these; "Let [the English] abuse you as much as they please. 'Who reads an American book?' No Englishman certainly, except with a view of borrowing its contents without giving the author credit for them. Besides, every true born Englishman knows, that the shortest way of elevating his own country, is to depress all others as much as possible" (p. 83). Other "letters" contain romanticized accounts of Hendrik Hudson's "melancholy end," the story of Major André, and sketches of some New York towns, among them Tarrytown, "distinguished by being within a mile or two of Sleepy Hollow, the scene of a pleasant legend of our friend Geoffrey Crayon, with whom in days long past we have often explored this pleasant valley, fishing along the brooks, though he was beyond all question the worst fisherman we ever knew. He had not the patience of Job's wife--and without patience no man can be a philosopher or a fisherman" (p. 109).

Names of New York towns (Ossining, Cold Spring, Newburgh) and names of rivers and mountains (Murderer's Creek, Bear Mountain, the Kaatskills) provide openings for additional anecdotes and digressions, each of which is actually either a short tale or an essay. But the denouement is reached with Paulding's pages on Ballston and Saratoga Springs, which are divided into "chapters"

(essays) on "Puffing" (Chapter I, pp. 220-222); "Of Drinking the Waters" (II, 222-225); "Of Eating" (III, 225-228); "Of Fashionable Tournure, and the Behaviour Becoming in the Young Ladies at the Springs" (IV, 228-239); "On the Behaviour Proper for Married Ladies at the Springs" (V, 239-243); "Of Married Men, and the Behaviour Proper for Them at the Springs" (VI, 244-253); "Of the Exquisites, and the Whole Duty of Man at the Springs" (VII, 253-272); "Of the Behaviour Proper for Elderly Single Gentlemen at the Springs" (VIII, 272-277); "Of Matrimony, and the Best Mode of Insuring Happiness in the State, by a Discreet Choice of a Helpmate" (IX, 277-281); and "Of the Best Modes of Killing the Grand Enemy of the Fashionable Human Race, Who Have Nothing To Do in This World--but Be Happy" (X, 281-292).

From the viewpoint of subject matter, there is little difference between these essays by Paulding and the great numbers of unsigned essays published in the periodicals of the era. Each of Paulding's titles is echoed and foreshadowed by hundreds of others. But Paulding is not, as the anonymous essayists were, engaging in pedestrian moral exhortation. No reader, to say it another way, is expected to take seriously Paulding's rules for the behavior of single gentlemen at the springs. Instead, no shrine is safe from his irreverencies. He wickedly taunts everything from the epicure to the foolish Americans who make up the "ultima thule of the fashionable world," and he does it in

a way that recalls the liveliness and ebullience of the first Salmagundi rather than the tone of irritating sharpness evident in the Salmagundi, Second Series or the bitter tone of A Sketch of Old England by a New-England Man (1822). Especially lively even today is the tenth essay, in which Paulding avers that Tom Moore's songs ought to be preferred on rainy days "because they are altogether sentimental, or sensual, which is quite synonymous now a days. Next to actual, bona fide kissings, embracings, palpitations, luscious meetings, and heart rending adieus, is the description of these things in luscious verse, aided by the magic strains of melting melody" (p. 286). In literature, Paulding continues, "it is much to be regretted that we have nothing new of Lord Byron, but his helmet . . . now, at least with the exception of this present work, unless a Waverley or a Cooper tumbles down from the summit of Parnassus, there is scarcely any thing worth reading but souvenirs . . ." (pp. 286-287).

It is clear from these examples that Paulding's style is different from Irving's, but it is difficult to be precise about specific differences. Broadly speaking, it is safe to say that Washington Irving has been and will be remembered for his charm of language; Paulding has not been and will not be. Yet this is not to say, as William Paulding said of his father, he wrote "a hasty and careless style, impatient of correction," for as a

generalization this is too easily made.⁶³ Although the essays in Guide to the Springs and an occasional letter in Letters from the South remind the reader of the hasty, witty pieces in Salmagundi, First Series or of the helter-skelter scenes in Irving's "The Art of Book-Making," these do not reflect Paulding's usual style. In most of his essays he moves less imaginatively, less ebulliently, more dryly, certainly more sourly, than does Irving. In his wickedest flights of satire--and Paulding was first of all a satirist whereas Irving was a familiar essayist and storyteller--Paulding's language glitters where Irving's glows. Such is clearly evident in the defense of American politics, morals, manners, taste, literature, and religion which Paulding constructed in The United States and England: Being a Reply to the Criticism on Inchiquin's Letters, Contained in the Quarterly Review for January, 1814 (1815).⁶⁴ It is equally discernible in the earlier John Bull and Brother Jonathan (1812) which although in humorous vein is decidedly different from Irving's rollicking prose. Even in His John Bull in America; or, The New Munchausen (1825), which was the last in the series of Paulding's full-scale defenses of America and which probably best deserves the term burlesque, his satire has more ice than warmth, despite William Paulding's

⁶³ Literary Life, p. iv.

⁶⁴ Herold, pp. 50-52.

description of it as "good-humoured castigation."⁶⁵

There is, too, distinctly less of Paulding in his essays than there is of Irving in his. The reader cannot warm up to the Dutchman as he can to Geoffrey Crayon, even in some passages which are excellent prose. Despite the attempts at personal approach made by Paulding in Letters from the South through use of the first person and direct address ("dear reader"), one senses in Paulding's writing a coolness of observation, a separateness, as if the writer were removed from the reader by a pane of glass which permits seeing but not feeling. To say it another way, Paulding never seems to take full part in what he writes about, even when he does.

A further tendency in Paulding's essays strengthens the assertion about his separateness. In his description in Letter XXX of Letters from the South of "ranging up the valley from Staunton to W[inchester]" he sees a "fine country of limestone, abounding in gay meadows, and pure springs, and bordered on all sides by mountains." He sees, too, many more things: towns, roads, rivers, deep valleys, industries. But he sees few people. Where Irving cannot see a distant sail without immediately speculating about what kind of person made it, or is using it, or of what importance it is to some man in particular or to mankind

⁶⁵ The Bulls and the Jonathans; Comprising John Bull and Brother Jonathan and John Bull in America, ed. William I. Paulding (New York, 1867), p. 149.

in general, Paulding would rather discuss methods of navigation or construction. Where Irving gives the impression of being only briefly extra-family in his description of the holiday spent at Bracebridge Hall, Paulding remains the outsider, the observer rather than the participator, in his description of the plantation at which he was a guest.

Moreover, Paulding's style is not that of a familiar essayist. It does not lack music, as these two excerpts prove: "As I continued strolling forward, there gradually came a perfect calm--and even the aspen-tree whispered no more. But it was not the deathlike calm of a winter's night, when the northwest wind grows quiet, and the frosts begin in silence to forge fetters for the running brooks, and the gentle current of life, that flows through the veins of the forest."⁶⁶ In an arch mood, too, it is musical:

There is no place in the world where this rule of feeding people into good humor is more infallible than at the springs, where the appetite becomes so gloriously teasing and imperative, that it is credibly reported in the annals of the bon ton, that a delicate young lady did once eat up her beau, in a rural walk before breakfast. Certain it is, the unfortunate young gentleman was never heard of, and his bills at Congress Hall, and at the tailors [sic], remain unpaid even unto this day.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Letters from the South, Letter XXIII, II, 17-18.

⁶⁷ New Mirror for Travellers, p. 227.

But Paulding often loses his ear, and the result is halting, jagged writing that the reader must struggle with:

There is a tradition current here, the truth of which I cannot vouch for, that after quitting the house I mentioned, Cornwallis occupied a cave, which I was shown, excavated in the side of a bank fronting on the river. It consists of two rooms, cut or scraped, in a soft sandstone, and is thirty or forty feet under ground, so that it is entirely bomb proof. Whether his lordship ever made this his headquarters or not, certain it is, that such is the common tradition here, although I confess, an old weather-beaten Scotsman, living on the beach, close by, asked our servant, "if we were such d--d fools, as to believe that an English general, and a lord, would hide himself in a cave?"⁶⁸

Though Irving occasionally piled phrase upon phrase in choppy fashion, he did it rarely. Indeed, as Henry Pochmann has said, Irving was known to have remonstrated with his publisher for having inserted so many commas that they interrupted the flow of his language.⁶⁹ The long sentence with the frequent short stop was Paulding's *métier*, however, not only in his essays but also in his writings generally. Moreover, where, as we have seen, Irving varied his prose rhythm and pace to complement his structure and sense, Paulding rarely did so as effectually. His

⁶⁸ Letters from the South, Letter VI, I, 61. See also Letter IV, I, 31, for another example.

⁶⁹ Pochmann (AWS), p. lxxviii. Also see Letters of Washington Irving to Henry Brevoort, pp. 313-323.

description of imminent fisticuffs between a wagoner and a batteauxman in Letter XXIX of Letters from the South, for example, though it moves more swiftly than passages of his which describe the calm beauties of an autumnal evening, hardly engenders the kind of breathlessness that Irving's more facile and leaping prose does.

The position of James Kirke Paulding in the canon of American belles-lettres, however necessary a point to be decided, cannot be fully discussed in these pages, even though the most recent studies of the Knickerbocker writers and the period in which they lived have reached no agreement on this question.⁷⁰ His position as a familiar essayist, however, must be estimated; and it may be done succinctly. Clearly superior in style and structure to the flood of unsigned trivia which filled the magazines of the era, Paulding's essays cannot, however, approach the quality of those by Irving. A few of his best ones,

⁷⁰ Stanley T. Williams dismisses Paulding as a writer "whose claims to fame are slight indeed" (Irving, II, 269). Paulding's biographer, Amos Herold, stoutly declares that Paulding's "best work is pure, healthful, and wholesome. No one familiar with it will conclude that he wrote nothing worthwhile" (Paulding, p. 144). Kendall Taft attempts no evaluation of Paulding's work, but instead quotes a critic from the New-York Mirror of June 4, 1831, whose opinion was that Paulding was "not inferior, in the extent and diversity of his talents, to any American writer" (Minor Knickerbockers, p.13).

One point does emerge from this disagreement: Paulding's work needs a careful, scholarly reappraisal, not only of its value as American belles-lettres but also of its significance as social document in the early years of the American nineteenth century.

such as the final essay in Guide to the Springs and Letter IV in the first volume of Letters from the South, deserve to be rescued from oblivion. They would stand, in my judgment, on intrinsic merit in a modern anthology. But as Paulding's contemporaries, Fitz-Greene Halleck and Joseph Rodman Drake, saw with accuracy in 1820, it is not as a familiar essayist that Paulding earns a place in American literature. Halleck summed it up well in one stanza from Fanny:

Alas! for Paulding--I regret to see
 In such a stanza one whose great powers,
 Seen in their native element, will be
 Known to a future age, the pride of ours.
 There is none breathing who can better wield
 The battle axe of satire.

Theodore Sedgwick Fay and William Cox. "In early boyhood," wrote Theodore Sedgwick Fay to Washington Irving in June 1833, "the charms of literature first broke upon me through the productions of your pen; gratitude, therefore, as well as respect and admiration, induces me to dedicate to you the following compositions of one who also warmly appreciates the treasures which you have added to the English language."⁷¹ After only a cursory glance one might interpret this verbal bouquet as a device which would perhaps increase sales for Crayon Sketches as, for example,

⁷¹ "To Washington Irving, Esquire." Prefatory note to Crayon Sketches. By An Amateur [William Cox], ed. Theodore S. Fay (New York, 1833), I, iii.

dedication to or introduction by a recognized author is employed in present-day publishing.⁷² Perhaps, on the other hand, its purpose was more closely linked to the "publish American authors" movement than to sales. Perhaps, like the authors of the English Renaissance, Theodore Fay sought or had found patronage. Or perhaps, the dedication was sincerely meant or deserved--or both. A reading of Fay's two-volume Dreams and Reveries of a Quiet Man, published a year earlier in 1832, provides the answer: Irving's Sketch Book was, to put it kindly, the model for Fay's collection of essays.

Fay was probably sincere when he wrote that Irving had introduced him to the "charms of literature in early boyhood." He was just twelve years old when the first number of the Sketch Book appeared, and only sixteen when he contributed the first of a large number of short pieces, a juvenile essay entitled "Manner," to the first volume of the New-York Mirror.⁷³ It was the kind of innocuous, sentimental, moral essay that Samuel Woodworth of "The Bucket" fame, editor of the first volume of the Mirror, liked, and Fay was rewarded with the opportunity to contribute more of the same. On September 6, he sent in "Associations,"

⁷² See, for example, An Unhurried View of Erotica (New York, 1958), which includes a "Preface" by George Jean Nathan and an "Introduction" by Theodor Reik.

⁷³ I (August 16, 1833), 18.

and on September 13, "Mosquitos" [sic].⁷⁴ The October 4 Mirror found room for "Politeness," and the October 11 issue printed "The Unhappy Man."⁷⁵ "Hair" saw print on October 18; and by early November the young essayist was esteemed highly enough by Woodworth to be asked to review James Kirke Paulding's first novel, Koningsmark, which had been published only the week before.⁷⁶ When the first volume of the Mirror ended with the issue for July 24, 1824, Fay had contributed at least twenty essays and reviews.⁷⁷ The aspiring young essayist and the hopeful young periodical had begun together, had weathered the perilous first year, and had successfully gained a foothold on the Knickerbocker literary ladder.

One of the most prolific of the Irving adulators (there are ninety-seven essays in the two volumes of Dreams and Reveries alone, all collected from the New-York Mirror,

⁷⁴ I, 42-43, 50-51.

⁷⁵ I, 76-77, 84.

⁷⁶ I, 92, 108.

⁷⁷ This number must be regarded as a minimum number, to which should probably be added the "Little Genius" series of essays which bear Fay's signature, "F," are stylistically his, and are included in his two-volume Dreams and Reveries (1832). In the "Advertisement" to the first volume of this work Fay noted that the numbers of the "Little Genius" signed "D" were written by "the author of Howard's Essays on Imprisonment for Debt" [Joseph D. Fay] and implies that he himself was the author of the others in the series. Fay also is the author of the essay series signed "Sedley" which appeared regularly throughout the ninth and tenth volumes of the Mirror (1831-1832), and of countless tales, sketches, and essays which he signed in full after 1833.

where they were originally printed between 1823 and 1831), Fay wrote not only for the Mirror, though that periodical is the chief source for Fay essay material, but also for the Knickerbocker, the New York Evening Post, and for numbers of gift books and annuals. Indeed, Fay was as popular a contributor to The Atlantic Club-Book as Samuel Goodrich was to The Token.⁷⁸ But Fay achieved his popularity partially by imitation of Irving's essays in the Sketch Book, partially by unrestrained adulation of Irving in the public print thereby giving readers what they expected and wanted to see, and only in a smaller sense by the intrinsic merit of what he wrote.

Not as outspoken as Paulding nor as winningly persuasive as Irving, Fay entered the battle for the defense of American literature with sugar instead of salt as his weapon. He neglected no opportunity to sing the praises of his contemporaries, especially the New York authors, and it is a rare essay in Dreams and Reveries which does not extol half a dozen writers, especially Irving, or which does not devote an equal amount of space to praise of things American. In "The Little Genius--No. I" Fay avers: "How delighted I should be if I could only promote the interests of the New-York Mirror's worthy editor [now George P. Morris] by any humble influence of mine. . . ." He

⁷⁸ Fay contributed no less than five essays to the Club-Book, a number equalled only by William Cox among the other contributors.

continues: "Surely New York is a wonderful city! She is only in her infancy, as it were, and yet she abounds and overflows with editors, poets, novelists, painters, patriots, and great men!"⁷⁹ In Number Three he praises George Washington and the New York press, and in Number Five: "New Yorkers shine forth to great advantage on every occasion that demands taste, elegance, wealth, and public spirit" (I, 21). But it is in an essay such as "Reading" (I, 173-176) that Fay becomes cloying. While having a "conversation" with a young lady the essayist notes in her library the "best" authors: Swift, Sterne, Goldsmith, Shakespeare, Scott, Wordsworth, Irving, Paulding, and Bryant. He adds, grudgingly, that "there were also the 'Spectator,' the 'Rambler,' Pope, Dryden, and Milton." He is surprised to find that her conversation is not "edifying indeed" and further discovers that she is "totally uninformed as to the value" of the books she owns. In modest tones he admits that he is often asked to recommend books for young readers who have not had his experience in literature, but that in suggesting books he "not unfrequently" makes errors because he does not know what kind of mind he is recommending books for. For example, he "handed the 'Dutchman's Fireside' to a lady whose jaded taste and unhealthy imagination could not be goaded into excitement

⁷⁹ Dreams and Reveries of a Quiet Man (New York, 1832), I, 2. Subsequent references to this work are included in the text.

by a stimulus less powerful than the 'Monk,' the 'Mysteries of Udolpho,' or the 'Three Spaniards'." Yet as often as he errs, he succeeds--brilliantly:

I remember having once run over a passage of the 'Sketch Book' to a wild young girl, whose high spirits were excited by a merry scene. It was an experiment to see whether a page of perfectly sweet eloquence and tenderness would have any effect upon her, and what, in the midst of her seemingly irrepressible merriment; and so I watched to behold the change which her features underwent; how her attention was gradually arrested, fastened, and aroused--how gently she yielded to the mastery of the writer, whose thoughts met answering thoughts in her bosom, sleeping there with a kindred beauty, and awakened suddenly by his tender art. I reverence involuntarily a clear spirit, when I find it thus susceptible to all the noble impressions which greater minds produce. I love to send the fine thought like an arrow to the heart, and to feel that it is quivering there as it did in my own (I, 174-175).

Even in this morass of inappropriate metaphor one may see that to Fay, Irving is a god of literature. Nor can one miss the implication that the author of the Sketch Book should be a god to all others who read.

In Fay, adulation unfortunately bred imitation. Echoes of the Sketch Book sound clearly on every page of Dreams and Reveries; sometimes it is an idea, sometimes phraseology, sometimes an approach. In "At Sea" (I, 65-69), for example, Fay borrows idea, device, and actual wording from Irving's "The Voyage" (Sketch Book, I, 6-16). Fay's story "Resolution" (II, 118-125) uses scenic description

strongly reminiscent of Irving's "Rural Life in England" (Sketch Book, I, especially pp. 94-95); and his "Christmas" (II, 154-158) borrows freely from Irving's essay of the same name (Sketch Book, I, 285-294). Yet it is equally clear that Fay made no attempt to cloak his borrowings. Indeed, as Fay himself wrote in a review of The Alhambra: "We are no halfway admirer of the former writings of Crayon, Knickerbocker, and Jonathan Old Style. We have been led by the same warm and gentle heart, the same refined and cultivated mind, the same soft and melting, yet disciplined, imagination for many a year long gone by" (II, 150).

By the use of "we" in this review Fay might well have meant "William Cox and I," for he certainly had referred to Cox when he spoke in the dedication of Crayon Sketches of "one who also warmly appreciates the treasures which [Irving has] added to the English language."⁸⁰ No less than Fay, Cox found Geoffrey Crayon's work worthy of praise and also of imitation. "Streets of London" and "Christmas," the first two essays in Volume Two of Crayon Sketches, both praise Irving and borrow from him.⁸¹ The very title of the

⁸⁰ See note 71. Though born in England, Cox may be included among American essayists since most of his creative work was written and published in New York during this period.

⁸¹ Crayon Sketches. By an Amateur (New York, 1833), II, 2-25. Subsequent references to this work will appear in the text.

collection, Crayon Sketches, echoes Irving, though Cox probably did not choose it himself, for this collection of his essays was edited and published by Theodore Fay more than two years after Cox had sailed for England as special correspondent for the New-York Mirror. However, Cox's words in praise of Irving were certainly his own and leave no doubt as to what rank Irving held in Cox's estimation. Irving's portraits of "Wouter Van Twiller, William Kieft, and Peter Stuyvesant, are three as finished pictures in the fine, quiet, rich old Dutch school as any one need wish to look upon" (II, 103). Moreover, Cox concluded, "for our own poor taste, after Sir Walter Scott in the present age, give us Washington Irving" (II, 103).

Like Fay, Cox wrote series of familiar essays and pieces of criticism for the New-York Mirror, having contributed his first papers to that periodical in 1825. A frequent contributor, also, to various annuals and gift books, Cox often shared space in their indexes with Fay and was apparently as popular with the readers of The Atlantic Club-Book as Fay was. Both men not only began their writing careers as contributors to the New-York Mirror but also later rose to positions of leadership in the affairs of that periodical, Fay becoming assistant editor in February 1831, and Cox being appointed as special English correspondent when he left New York for England in June 1830. As has been said, both men admired

Irving and sang his praises in their essays and reviews.

Yet it is in my judgment unwise to pair these men and dismiss them merely as "milk-sop" imitators of Irving--as Professor Stanley T. Williams appears to do.⁸² For although there are numerous superficial similarities in their careers, attitudes, and writings, upon closer examination their essays reveal distinct differences.

Certain points of comparison come conveniently to view. Both Cox and Fay admired Irving's "The Voyage" and used this essay from the Sketch Book as a basis for essays of their own. As has been noted, Fay's "At Sea" reproduces almost exactly Irving's speculations at the beginning of "The Voyage" on man being separated from the tide of humanity. It continues with the story of a horrible shipwreck; Irving's essay has a similar story, told by the captain of the ship. Fay's other "reflections" concern "pleasant scenes which I had witnessed in the streak of blue land fast receding in the west." No matter that Irving's words are: "I saw the last blue line of my native land fade away like a cloud in the horizon." Fay's debt is clear.

Cox, on the other hand, strikes a different note in his essay based on Irving's "The Voyage":

⁸² Irving, II, 277.

Washington Irving crossed the Atlantic, and wrote a beautiful piece thereupon, entitled 'The Voyage,' which delighted every one. The natural consequences ensued. All the gentlemen who crossed the Atlantic afterwards, concluded to do as Washington Irving had done, and delight every one likewise, so that in the course of a short time there was no scarcity of marine narratives. . . . They moreover let the reader have a minute insight into the state of their feelings, the workings of their bosoms, &c. as they leaned over the ship's side, gazed upon the vasty deep, and thought of the friends and home they had left behind them; and also their vague and very extraordinary speculations concerning the land that lay before them--all which, is it not to be found expanded over an infinite number of pages in the infinite number of 'Letters from Europe,' which quietly repose on the back shelves of the establishments of Messrs. Bliss & Carvill, Broadway, and other incautious booksellers? (II, 116-118)

It is not for me, continues Cox, to "affect singularity" by not writing such a piece--so here it is.

Nor is this bantering tone unique in this one Cox essay. In his "Christmas" Cox again admits his debt to Irving: "How many good things have been said and sung about christmas [sic], from the old poets in Elizabeth's time down to Washington Irving" (II, 22). But then Cox lugubriously laments the passing of the "good old" Christmas celebrations, observes that "now do men eat more than is deemed necessary for the support of nature; apoplexies are prevalent," and sardonically notes that "now do inveterate moralists indite long essays, stating that there have been many changes in the year that is past, and

likewise the probability that there will be many more in the year that is to come . . ." (II, 22).

His remarks on "Eating" declare that since Adam's time eating has never been out of fashion and that New Yorkers who diet lose all their capacities for pleasure. In literature "eating has always cut a conspicuous figure. The old dramatists are filled with soul, or rather, stomach-felt descriptions of rich luscious feasts." Ben Jonson's, Shakespeare's, and "Fielding's and Smollett's heroes are good for nothing without their dinner. . . ." But the modern school of writing, moans Cox in pseudo-lament, allows its heroines to live for a month "on the smell of a boiled chicken," except for Walter Scott who, "(heaven bless him!) among his other worthy deeds, has revived the good old practice of eating and drinking on paper." Modern magazine writers can learn from Scott and Shakespeare, concludes Cox, and should ignore the "puppyism" lately sprung up among the "petit-maitre" correspondents of the New Monthly Magazine. "Puppyism in writing and dressing is bad enough, but puppyism on so solemn and serious a subject as eating, is carrying the jest a little too far" (I, 221-227).

In "Steam" Cox describes a "bilious friend who is a great admirer and imitator of Lord Byron; that is, he affects misanthropy, masticates tobacco, has his shirts made without collars, calls himself a miserable man, and writes

poetry with a glass of gin-and-water before him" (I, 106). In "The Rambler, No. I," Cox flays the myriad magazinists who desecrate Dr. Johnson's memory by writing inane essays under that title, and concludes, wickedly: "The grand secret of composition now-a-days (except among the highest) is to be flippant, fantastical, and unfeeling, together with the judicious use of notes of exclamation and interrogation, and a copious admixture of dashes and asterisks" (I, 97). And in "Editorial Courtesies," he characterizes the periodicals of his age (except, of course, the Mirror) as "virtuous vehicles of knowledge and information made up of quack advertisements, dreadful murders, dreadful poetry, Joe-Miller jests, and editorial personalities." Poor Socrates, Cox declares, "would be lost in utter amazement to find that the very worst and most ignorant portion of the people . . . had been, by some strange fatality, elevated to instruct and amuse the rest" (II, 136-143).

In short, Cox's tone is not Fay's, nor is Cox's style Fay's. Moreover, Fay apparently recognized this and attempted to forestall angry replies by disgruntled readers to Cox's annoying sallies. In the Preface to Crayon Sketches, after pointing out that these were really very good essays (he thinks the author "what some critic less appropriately called Milton, 'a very good writer--very!'",), Fay cautions: "No intelligent reader will believe that the author intends [in "Marriageable Ladies of the United

States"] seriously to discountenance temperance societies, which have certainly been productive of great benefits to the nation. It is a mere exhibition of the irony and talent for burlesquing. . . ."⁸³ Regarding Cox's "Theatrical Portraits," which cast darts at numerous treaders of the boards in New York, Fay urges that these "must be regarded as intended good-naturedly, and as merely the offspring of a merry mood."⁸⁴ Moreover, he adjures the reader to remember that Cox's comments which took a dim view of the Thespian abilities of Mrs. Sharpe, Fanny Kemble, and Mr. Richings were written "years ago and do no justice to present improved talents and brilliant eminence" of these actors. In a final awkwardness, Fay "trusts that . . . criticism will not be inconsiderately severe, but, instead of coldly repressing the talent [of Cox] here displayed, that it will encourage the youthful writer to more elaborate efforts."⁸⁵ When it is known that Cox was two years older than Fay, and that Fay had himself been a Mirror essayist at age sixteen, Fay's "Preface" to Cox's Crayon Sketches is revealed in all its fatuousness.

It is ironic that in the work of the American literary figure with the longest period of active productivity, one

⁸³ Preface to Crayon Sketches, I, vii.

⁸⁴ Crayon Sketches, I, viii.

⁸⁵ Crayon Sketches, I, x.

can find little to praise.⁸⁶ In his own time, despite bread-and-butter notices of Dreams and Reveries and Norman Leslie in magazines which lived on the New-York Mirror, Fay made little mark. He made something less than a success of his position as assistant editor of the Mirror; after only fourteen months in that capacity he resigned, married, sailed for Europe, wrote a series of flaccid "Letters from Europe" back to the Mirror--the kind of thing that Cox had railed at in Crayon Sketches but with which Bayard Taylor was later to make an enviable reputation in the 1850's--and began writing his first novel. In this endeavor Fay was again unlucky, for Norman Leslie (1835) found its way onto Poe's desk whence that outspoken critic denounced it as "the most inestimable piece of balderdash with which the common sense of the good people of America was ever so openly or so villainously insulted."⁸⁷ Though Fay attempted to parry Poe's thrust in a satirical retort, "The Successful Novel!!" which he printed in the Mirror, April 9, 1836, and in which he characterized Poe as "Bulldog, the critick of the Southern Literary Passenger," the virulence of Poe's

⁸⁶ Fay printed his first essay in the New-York Mirror in 1823, and he published The Three Germanys, a history heavily coated with evangelism, in 1889, thus exceeding by half a dozen years the sixty-year active writing period of Howells.

⁸⁷ The Southern Literary Messenger, II (December 1835), 56. Quoted in Taft, Minor Knickerbockers, p. 398.

attack was too strong for Fay's unequal pen.⁸⁸

Professor Stanley T. Williams's curt dismissal of Fay as a "milk-sop" imitator of Irving, then, seems just, even though it must be said that Fay's essays, collected in Dreams and Reveries of a Quiet Man, however sugary and imitative of Irving's, are of somewhat better quality than those unsigned "effusions" which flooded the periodicals of his era.

But to include William Cox in this denigratory judgment seems equally unjust. As Kendall Taft has said, Cox's early contributions to the Mirror, primarily those which aimed shots at the New York stage and at New York customs in general, "excited considerable comment."⁸⁹ Cox's play, Rokeby, based on Scott's poem, with music by Henry Berkeley, and some incidental lyrics by Samuel Woodworth, was successfully produced at the Park Theatre in May 1830. And his essays, collected by Theodore Fay under the title Crayon Sketches (1833), were well enough received as to require reprinting in London (1833) and in Edinburgh (1834).

Moreover, as a stylist Cox may not be classed with Fay. At his best in satire, Cox had recaptured the tone of the original Salmagundi. Fay's few attempts at satire mired

⁸⁸ It did not, however, deter Fay from writing three more novels--Sydney Clifton (1839), The Countess Ida (1840), and Hoboken, A Romance (1843)--of which The Countess Ida was probably the most successful, reaching its fourth edition before the beginning of the Civil War.

⁸⁹ Minor Knickerbockers, p. 266.

themselves in effusively long and often inept sentences. When Cox inveighed against the "copious admixture of dashes and asterisks," he may well have had in mind some of Fay's sins of rhetoric, as he may well have been referring to some of Fay's colorless "moral" essays when he wrote of the "inveterate moralists" who "indite long essays" about inanities. Certainly Cox's essays are readable today, not only for the interest they hold for students of American literature of this period, especially of the drama of the age, but also for their liveliness of tone and their sharpness of idea. Nor does one have the urge to leaf over pages or skim paragraphs in Cox's essays, even when the pieces are read consecutively. Fay's Dreams and Reveries, on the other hand, provide only occasional high points, cannot be read as a group without ennui, do not recall the reader for another session as Lamb's or Irving's do, and are tiresomely repetitious.

Finally, though neither Cox nor Fay is known today to any save the specialist in American minor literature of the National Period, in my judgment Cox, like Paulding, would benefit from a careful modern investigation.⁹⁰

⁹⁰ Only Kendall Taft, in his Minor Knickerbockers and in his article, "William Cox, Author of Crayon Sketches," American Literature, XVI (March 1944), 10-18, has done any work on Cox specifically, although Stanley T. Williams gives Cox brief mention in his Life of Washington Irving.

Nathaniel P. Willis. Like George P. Morris of the New-York Mirror, Nathaniel P. Willis found his way into the profession of literature through the editor's door. Willis too had spent his early childhood in the home and workshop of a printer and journalist; his father, N. P. Willis, was for many years printer, editor, and publisher of the Boston Recorder. And like Morris, Cox, Theodore Sedgwick Fay, and Paulding, Willis began his literary career while still in his 'teens by contributing poems and short prose pieces to periodicals.

The year 1827 might well be considered to be Willis's literary annus primus, for although he had already become known as a periodical poet under his signatures "Roy" and "Cassius," 1827 brought him in order his first important poetry prizes, his graduation from Yale College, and his first published volume, Sketches (poems).⁹¹

On March 28, 1827, Thomas C. Clarke, editor and publisher of The Album and Ladies' Weekly Gazette (Philadelphia), announced: "After having attentively perused the numerous Tales, Essays and Poems, which were presented in competition for the premiums offered by the proprietor of this paper, the several Committees have made the following decisions: To M. [sic] P. Willis, Esq. of Yale College,

⁹¹ Willis received an unstated amount as prize for his poem, "The Sacrifice of Abraham," which he contributed to his father's newspaper in 1826. See Henry A. Beers, Nathaniel Parker Willis (Boston, 1885), p. 49. This volume hereinafter cited as Beers.

the Gold Medal, valued at \$30, for the poem entitled, 'Confessions of a Student'."⁹² Like George Morris of the New-York Mirror, whose prize contests had undoubtedly provided the model for The Album's,⁹³ Thomas Clarke had seen the value of the "Literary Prize" and had organized such a competition while his newly founded periodical was still struggling to survive the often perilous first year.⁹⁴ Moreover, Clarke had assembled a committee of judges whose combined reputations in the contemporary literary world dwarfed the renown of even the Mirror's judges. To chair his committee Clarke had selected James Nelson Barker, author of the successful and highly regarded Superstition (1824) and, in these years before the plays of Robert Montgomery Bird had made their mark in New York, the most sought after playwright of the era. To serve with Barker, Clarke had named Dr. James McHenry, the Irish-born poet and novelist, who, although little known to New Yorkers perhaps, was to Philadelphians of the 1820's one of the most prolific and controversial poets and essayists of the age, having been assistant editor of the Philadelphia Monthly Magazine, author of the "Hours of Leisure" series

⁹² I (March 28, 1827), 6.

⁹³ The Mirror, the Mirror's contests, and Morris are regularly lauded in The Album. See, for example, I (February 28, 1827), 6.

⁹⁴ See I (February 7, 1827), 6, in the "Editor's Column," Clarke's plea to subscribers to remit what they owe. Such notices appear weekly throughout the first volume.

of essays in The Album, a collection of verse, The Pleasures of Friendship (1822), and a historical novel about Irishmen in the American Revolution, The Wilderness; or, Braddock's Time (1823). Other members of the committee, all Philadelphians and regular contributors to The Album, the Philadelphia Monthly Magazine, the Aurora, and the Philadelphia Visiter, were David Paul Brown, Joseph R. Chandler, Robert Ewing, and Edward Ingersoll.

The presence of Barker on the committee lends some stature to Willis's award, even though the "Confessions of a Student" is rather maudlin, juvenile verse. In general, these literary prize contests, at least in the magazines of limited circulation and mediocre editorial standards, were little more than advertising schemes designed to increase circulation by "proving" the position of the particular journal as a publisher of "American literature." Some competitions, however, such as this one in The Album and the one in the New-York Mirror, did encourage young writers by awarding prizes to more respectable literary efforts on the basis of merit, rather than giving them to "effusions" produced by local writers merely because they were produced by local writers. The Album's "Gold Medal (\$20) for the best Essay," for example, went to Lydia Maria Francis (later Mrs. Child) for her "Essay on the Cultivation of Female Intellect," which had been entered in the same year as Willis's poem. And although like Willis's poem Miss Francis's essay is in fact a juvenile theme, it is,

despite its forbidding title, superior to the sub-literary pieces on the same subject which were frequently printed in many a general and ladies' magazine of the age.⁹⁵

Two days after The Album announced Willis's prize for "Confessions of a Student," the Christian Watchman of March 30, 1827, declared that Willis's "Absalom" had won its poetry prize (amount and kind not specified) for the year.⁹⁶

Soon thereafter, Willis began to receive regular invitations to contribute poems and essays to the Atlantic Souvenir, The Token, the Boston Lyceum, the Bristol Reporter, and the New-York Mirror. By the time that he was ready to graduate from Yale, then, Willis had already made a place for himself in American periodical literature.

Actually before Willis returned to New Haven in September of 1827 to take his degree, Samuel Goodrich had agreed to publish Willis's first volume of poems. More important, however, was the fact that the young writer had made such an impression on Goodrich that that enterprising and versatile Yankee immediately engaged him to edit The Legendary (1828) and The Token (1829). With these two opportunities to edit and to write, Willis seriously began his forty-year career as prose contributor and editor of

⁹⁵ Compare, for example, Miss Francis's essay with the unsigned "Woman's Prerogative," [American Athenaeum, I (June 9, 1825), 64], and the unsigned "Mental Capabilities of Females," [The Minerva, III n.s. (June 18, 1825), 173].

⁹⁶ Beers, p. 49.

American periodicals and annuals.

The Legendary, originally designed as a periodical, lasted for only two volumes, despite the fact that among its contributors were Lydia Huntley Sigourney, Catherine Sedgwick, Fitz-Greene Halleck, John Pierpont, Grenville Mellen, and Willis himself--all names to command the attention of American readers of the 1820's. For The Legendary Willis wrote the two "Prefaces," half a dozen poems, two sketches ("Unwritten Poetry," "Unwritten Philosophy"), and a humorous essay, "Leaves from a Colleger's Album."⁹⁷

Early in 1829, having meanwhile shared with Lydia Huntley Sigourney the \$100 prize offered by Goodrich for the 1828 Token, Willis established the American Monthly Magazine, installed himself as editor, principal writer, and publisher, and began a two-year struggle with finances, subscription lists, collections, and the myriad other problems attendant to new periodicals founded on shoestrings. In spite of these problems which must have exhausted much of his time, Willis was able to write at least half of each issue of the magazine for its twenty-eight months of life. Essays, poems, sketches, tales, and articles flowed

⁹⁷ Although at first glance they may seem tangential here, the details of Willis's early years--his contributions to periodicals and his winning of literary prizes, followed by his appointment to various editorial positions--form a pattern not uncommon to essayists of the era. T. S. Fay, Willis Gaylord Clark, Lewis Gaylord Clark, Lydia Child, and Lydia Sigourney began their careers in much the same way, as did other, better writers, notably Poe.

unendingly from his pen during these two years, and although none of these writings were of any moment, in doing them Willis gained needed experience in craftsmanship which later stood him in good stead as assistant editor of the New-York Mirror. Also, the germs of his later "Pencilings by the Way" essays, his "Slingsby" sketches and essays, and other variously named groups of travel essays and sketches appear in these early, hastily written bits in the Monthly and in his contributions during this same two-year period to the Boston Statesman, for which he had been engaged by its editor, Nathaniel Greene, to write "weekly pieces, short or long, prose or verse" at the rate of five dollars each.⁹⁸

Like many another periodical of the time, Willis's American Monthly could not survive the financial pressures of publication, and in July 1831, it died. Yet this event proved a fortunate one for Willis. The Monthly's list of subscribers was taken over by the New-York Mirror and Willis was invited by George Morris to join him and Theodore Fay in the editorship of the now very influential New York magazine. Accordingly, early in September Willis assumed equal rank with Fay as assistant to Morris and began immediately to write voluminously for his new magazine.⁹⁹ On September 17, the Mirror ran the usual "Card" in which the

⁹⁸ Beers, p. 91.

⁹⁹ IX (September 10, 1831), 79.

new editor followed protocol by expressing his pleasure at his new association, making his vow to serve his readers well, and affirming his complete severance from the affairs of the now defunct American Monthly.¹⁰⁰ On September 24, Willis contributed a sketch reminiscent of a seventeenth-century character, "Miss Albina M'Lush," and the first of his long essay series, "Pencilings by the Way."¹⁰¹

For the first time, too, in the same issue appeared the "Editor's Study" series of essays composed of "bald, disjointed chat . . . in which men of sense get together . . . and talk nonsense." Although this series appeared under the joint by-lines of Morris, Fay, and Willis, its style, subject matter, and general air stamp it as Willis's product, as does the occasion of its first appearance so soon after Willis's accession hint at his authorship. Of further significance is the fact, noticeable in succeeding issues of the Mirror, that Willis appears gradually to have taken over Fay's role as the most prolific regular editorial contributor: as the issues after October 1831 demonstrate, Fay's essays (signed "F," "Sedley," and Fay) appear in fewer numbers and less regularly, while Willis's

¹⁰⁰ IX (September 17, 1831), 87.

¹⁰¹ IX (September 24 [misdated September 25], 1831), 90-91.

increase in number weekly.¹⁰²

The essays in the New-York Mirror, including "Pencilings by the Way," represent Willis's first large, coherent group of essays, his most successful body of short prose other than fiction, and one of the best written series of familiar essays by an Irving contemporary. Willis could write English. His style, once freed of the juvenile floridity so evident in his early poetry and essays, was imaginative and attractive. It contained little of the jagged harshness that so often marred Paulding's Letters from the South; none of the sugary vapidness that coated Theodore Fay's Dreams and Reveries; and only now and then the kind of purple that forced the lesser magazinists' work into turgidity. It is witty, alive, and urbane; and although it bears the inevitable marks of hasty composition required of the era's editors, it is nonetheless pleasant and readable. "Miss Albina M'Lush" begins:

¹⁰² The issue for October 8, for example, contains in its regular eight pages "The Fancy Ball," a two-page short story by Willis (pp. 105-106); "Desultory Selections," probably the work of Willis and Fay as junior editors (p. 107); "Sketch of a Schoolfellow," a poem by Willis (p. 108); "Curiosity," a familiar essay by Willis (pp. 108-109); and the "Editor's Study," surely by Willis (p. 111). In other words, Willis contributed fully half of the contents of this issue of the Mirror, just as he had been doing regularly in the American Monthly Magazine for the previous two years. Surely no more prolific writer of periodical literature lived in this era, for succeeding issues of the Mirror throughout the 1830's contain a surfeit of Willis's short pieces in prose and verse.

I have a passion for fat women. If there is any thing I hate in life, it is what dainty people call a spirituelle. Motion--rapid motion--a smart, quick, squirrel-like step, a pert, voluble tone--in short, a lively girl--is my exquisite horror! I would as lief have a diable petit dancing his infernal hornpipe on my cerebellum as to be in the room with one. I have tried before now to school myself into liking these parched peas of humanity. I have followed them with my eyes, and attended to their rattle till I was as crazy as a fly in a drum. I have danced with them, and romped with them in the country, and periled the salvation of my 'white tights' by sitting near them at supper. I swear off from this moment. I do. I won't--no--hang me if I ever show another small, lively, spry woman a civility.¹⁰³

Perhaps the most immediately evident quality of Willis's prose for the modern reader is its colloquialism--this in spite of the frequent use of French language terms and epithets, which Willis loved. Reflected here too, and in the remainder of the essay, is the witty naughtiness that helped to give credence to his contemporary reputation of being a rake, a dandy, and a frivolous puppy. His alleged immoralities and his known predilection for conspicuous dress, which had earlier plagued him with annoying letters from anonymous deprecators in Boston,¹⁰⁴ seemed perfectly congruous, too, with the colorfully sensual tone of his prose. Later in this same essay, for example:

¹⁰³ New-York Mirror, IX (September 24 [misdated September 25], 1831), 90.

¹⁰⁴ Beers, pp. 90-91.

Her skin was clear, fine grained, and transparent: her temples and forehead perfectly rounded and polished, and her lips and chin swelling into a ripe and tempting pout . . . her eyes--large, liquid, and sleepy--they languished between their long black fringes as if they had no business with daylight--like two magnificent dreams, surprised in their jet embryos. . . . Oh! it was lovely to look into them! . . . I have seen the wind lift the masses of dark hair from her shoulders when it seemed like the coming to life of a marble Hebe--she had been motionless for so long. She was a model for a goddess of sleep. . . . When she [walks], it is with the deliberate majesty of a Dido. Her small plump feet melt to the ground like snow-flakes, and her figure sways to the indolent motion of her limbs, with a glorious grace and yieldingness quite indescribable.

"Pencilings by the Way" are attractive in a different way. Somewhat similar to the original Salmagundi and to many of the Mirror's other series of essays by Cox, Fay, and Morris in their preoccupation with the customs and manners of contemporary society, these essays are, however, more descriptive of scenery, manners, and customs than they are critical of them. Moreover, they deal not only with New York society, as most of the other Mirror series do, but also with the manners and activities of peoples in Montreal and Quebec, Philadelphia, and Baltimore and Washington, D. C.¹⁰⁵ And of course when Willis was in

¹⁰⁵ For examples of these, see the following issues of the Mirror:

New York: IX (October 1, 1831), 100.

Montreal: IX (November 12, 1831), 148-149.

Quebec: IX (January 7, 1832), 212-213.

Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington: IX (November 19, 1831), 157-158.

Paris, Marseilles, Florence, and other European capitals and famous cities, he wrote of those peoples and customs as well.

That these essays were well received by readers is evident: the "Editor's Study" columns during the summer and fall months of 1831 regularly report "gratifying communications" from subscribers about them. As a result, even though William Cox had been appointed "special English correspondent" for the magazine when he sailed for Southampton in June 1830, Morris provided Willis with \$500 expense money, bought him a ticket on the merchant ship Pacific bound for Le Havre, and saw him off in October 1831 with instructions to write a weekly "letter" for the Mirror at ten dollars each--this sum to be paid to Willis in addition to his regular salary as one of the editors of the Mirror.¹⁰⁶

The first of these letters was printed in the Mirror in a special column entitled "Letters from the Absent Editor" on January 14, 1832, with the title, "First Impressions of Europe. Number One. At Sea."¹⁰⁷ Only the titles and the special column treatment distinguish these letters

¹⁰⁶ Mirror, IX (November 19, 1831), 159.

¹⁰⁷ Although Beers' Willis is a valuable source for modern students of his subject, the book contains numerous errors in recording dates, amounts of prizes received by Willis, titles of essays, etc. It has, for example, February 13, 1832, as the date for the first Willis letter in the Mirror.

from Willis's "Pencilings," for they exhibit the same attention to surface detail and description of scenery and manners as the earlier series; indeed, some of the later letters later appeared as parts of the "Pencillings" (the new spelling was adopted after the appearance of the first English edition of the essays). Like the "Pencilings," too, they are discursive in form, brisk in style, and enlivened with numerous personal experiences and impressions of people the writer has met. As Irving had done before him, Willis toured Europe and made voluminous notes about everything and everyone he saw. Like Irving, too, Willis was able to translate his notes and observations into a collection of essays which was published in England early in 1835 under the old title with a new spelling, Pencillings by the Way. Unlike Irving's Sketch Book, however, of which only a few essays had appeared before 1819 in periodicals, Willis's Pencillings had appeared weekly, essay by essay, in the Mirror beginning on January 14, 1832, and continued to appear for nearly a year after the bound edition had been published.¹⁰⁸

Together with Morris and Fay and, for that matter, with every other contributor to the Mirror, Willis held Irving and his work in high esteem. Years later, by the time Irving had retired to Sunnyside and Willis to Idlewild, the esteem had transformed itself into mutual friendship,

¹⁰⁸ The final "Pencilling" in the Mirror was printed in the issue for February 1836.

and the two men exchanged neighborly visits and enjoyed the company of John Pendleton Kennedy, Bayard Taylor, Charles A. Dana, and George P. Morris (who had a summer home at Undercliff, across the Hudson at West Point).¹⁰⁹ Yet Willis was not, as the Knickerbockers generally were, in literary debt to the author of the Sketch Book. To be sure, he did adopt "Slingsby" from Irving's essay "The Schoolmaster" in Bracebridge Hall as his signature for the essays and stories he contributed while in England to the New Monthly Magazine, the Court Magazine, and the Metropolitan Magazine between 1834 and 1836. And there are in the early Mirror contributions some echoes of Irving, such as those in "At Sea" where Willis speculates on man's aloneness while on the deep waters, his separation from the tide of humanity, and his thoughts upon arriving in England, the land of his forefathers.¹¹⁰ But as William Cox had archly observed in his essay of similar title, everyone who could take pen in hand had written such an essay during the 1820's--certainly no group of travel essays which involved an Atlantic crossing was without such a prefatory piece; consequently, to attempt to establish Willis's debt to Irving on such a basis is folly, unless there are other echoes to add to this one and to the "Slingsby" borrowing.

¹⁰⁹ Beers, pp. 326-337.

¹¹⁰ Mirror, IX (January 14, 1832), 220; cf. Irving's "The Voyage" in the Sketch Book.

Thorough study of Willis's other essays in the Mirror between 1831 and 1835 and of those which appeared in The Token, the Legendary, and the Atlantic Club-Book during the same period, reveals only one other reasonably close parallel. "The First Feeling of Winter" begins:

How delightfully the first feeling of winter comes on the mind! What a throng of tranquillizing and affectionate thoughts accompany its first bright fires, and the sound out of doors of its first chilling winds. Oh, when the leaves are driven in troops through the streets, at nightfall, and the figures of the passers-by hurry on, cloaked and stooping with the cold, is there a pleasanter feeling in the world than to enter the closed and carpeted room, with its shaded lamps, and its genial warmth, and its cheerful faces about the evening table?¹¹¹

With such meagre evidence--a parallel or two and a borrowing of a name--in "Letters from the Absent Editor," "Pencillings by the Way," and the other unserialized essays by Willis in the Mirror, N. P. Willis cannot be said to have been in Irving's literary debt, any more than Cox in his "Letters from a European Correspondent" and his unserialized Mirror essays can be.¹¹² Willis's mercurial

¹¹¹ New-York Mirror, XIII (December 26, 1835), 204; compare this with the passage from Irving's "Christmas" cited earlier.

¹¹² I have not, of course, examined as thoroughly Willis's later writings (those composed and published after 1835) for echoes and parallels, and for other evidences of Irving's influence. Yet the facts as presented seem to argue against any turning toward Irving as a source, especially in the later years when the two men became closer friends.

personality, like Cox's, so evident in his writings, further argues against puppyism, as does the gradual deepening of mutual regard between Willis and Irving, for it is doubtful that Irving, despite his genial nature, would have warmed to a toady.

In fact, during the years of the early 1830's, when Irving's reputation was riding high indeed,¹¹³ Willis might probably better be described as a Cooper partisan. Soon after his arrival in Paris in November 1831, the newly appointed editor and correspondent of the Mirror was "adopted" by the American colony, a small but select group of Yankees who in turn had been adopted by Lafayette: Cooper, Horatio Greenough, Samuel F. B. Morse, and Dr. Samuel Gridley Howe.¹¹⁴ This group had regular "breakfast parties" to which Willis was invited; here he met many of the famous Europeans he describes in his essays.¹¹⁵ of the people he met, however, Willis was most taken with the author of The Spy. "It should endear Mr. Cooper to the

¹¹³ An excellent example of this is the report of the Irving "Welcome Home" dinner sponsored by, financed by, and thoroughly publicized by the Mirror. See the account of this, complete with innumerable toasts and dedications, in the Mirror, IX (June 9, 1832), 386-387, 390-391. The Mirror erred, however, in not inviting any women to the dinner and in not noticing female writers in the toasts. In the issue for June 16 is a long letter signed "Ellen B--" calling this oversight forcibly to the attention of readers.

¹¹⁴ Mirror, IX (March 4, 1832), 276; see also, IX (February 11, 1832), 252.

¹¹⁵ See, among others, Mirror, IX (February 25, 1832), 268; IX (February 18, 1832), 260; IX (February 4, 1832), 244.

hearts of his countrymen," wrote the grateful breakfast guest, "that he devotes all his influence, and no inconsiderable portion of his large income, to the encouragement of American artists."¹¹⁶ Even though Mr. Cooper has been abroad for some time, continued Willis, he has formed no preference for the works of foreigners but instead encourages Greenough in his sculpture and Morse in his painting.

In another "Letter" Willis describes Cooper's features and comments on them:

And here come two of our countrymen, who are constantly to be seen together--Cooper and Morse. That is Cooper with the blue surtout buttoned up to his throat, and his hat over his eyes. What a contrast between the faces of the two men! Morse, with his kind, open, gentle countenance, the very picture of goodness and sincerity; and Cooper, dark and corsair-looking, with his brows down over his eyes, and his strongly lined mouth fixed in an expression of moodiness and reserve. The two faces, however, are not equally just to their owners--Morse is all that he looks to be, but Cooper's features do him decided injustice. I take pride in the reputation this distinguished countryman of ours has for humanity and generous sympathy. The distress of the refugee liberals from all countries comes home especially to Americans, and the untiring liberality of Mr. Cooper particularly is a fact of common admission and praise.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁶ IX (March 4, 1832), 276.

¹¹⁷ Mirror, IX (May 5, 1832), 348.

Willis's concern over the cholera epidemic then raging in Paris was increased when he discovered that there had been some cases of it reported in "the airy quarter of St. Germain, in the same street with Mr. Cooper, and nearly opposite."¹¹⁸ Even meeting and conversing with the Countess Teresa Guiccioli--"a lovely and fascinating woman, [even though] her cheek bones are high, her forehead is badly shaped, the . . . frame of her features decidedly ugly; she dresses in the worst taste, too"--is of less importance than the fact that Cooper appeared too modest about his novels:

In a conversation with Mr. Cooper, the other day, he was remarking of how little consequence any one individual found himself in Paris, even the most distinguished. We were walking in the Tuileries, and the remark was elicited by my pointing out to him one or two celebrated persons, whose names are sufficiently known, but who walk the public promenades, quite unnoticed and unrecognized. He said he did not think there were five people in Paris who knew him at sight, though his works were advertised in all the bookstores, and he had lived in Paris one or two years, and walked there constantly. This was putting a strong case, for the French idolize Cooper. . . .¹¹⁹

And in the rest of the essay Willis continued to champion Cooper, although the author of The Spy might have read his admirer's next sentence with dismay:

¹¹⁸ Mirror, IX (June 2, 1832), 380.

¹¹⁹ Mirror, IX (June 16, 1832), 396.

The peculiarly translatable character of [Cooper's] works makes them read even better in a good translation than in the original. [!] It is so all over the continent, I am told. The Germans, Italians, and Spaniards prefer Cooper to Scott; and it is easily accounted for when one remembers how much of the beauty of the Waverley novels depends on their exquisite style, and how peculiarly Cooper's excellence lies in his accurate, definite, tangible descriptions. There is not a more admired author in Europe than Cooper, it is very certain; and I am daily asked whether he is in America at present--so little do the people of these crowded cities interest themselves about that which is immediately at their elbows.

On the occasion of Willis's departure from Paris for Marseilles, which he describes in Number Twenty-One of the "Letters," he again takes Cooper's part, and this time includes as a reinforcement of his argument a pointed criticism of other Americans who have been or are now abroad:

And speaking of Mr. Cooper, no one who loves or owns a pride in his native land, can live abroad without feeling what we owe to the patriotism, as well as the genius of this gifted man. If there is an individual that loves the soil that gave him birth, and so shows it that we are more respected for it, it is he. Mr. Cooper's position is a high one; he has great advantages, and he improves them to the uttermost. His benevolence and activity in all enterprises for the relief of suffering, give him influence, and he employs it like a true philanthropist and a real lover of his country. I say this particularly, though it may look like too personal a remark, because Americans abroad are not always national. I am often mortified by reproaches from foreigners, quoting admissions made by my countrymen, which should be the last on their lips. A very distinguished person told me a day or two since, that the 'Americans abroad were the

worst enemies we had in Europe.' It is difficult to conceive at home how such a remark stings. Proportionately, one takes a true patriot to his heart, and I feel it right to say here, that the love of country and active benevolence of Mr. Cooper, distinguish him abroad, even more than his genius. . . .¹²⁰

These extracts from Willis's essays also indicate his militant Americanism. As persistent as Irving in his defense of American literature and culture, Willis nevertheless reminds one more of Paulding and his flashing sallies and parries. After having praised Cooper for forming no preference for the work of foreign writers and artists but rather encouraging an American sculptor, Greenough, and an American painter, Morse, Willis ends his essay by drawing by implication a wickedly clever contrast between the Americans enjoying their "intellectual and patriotic" pastimes and the English disporting themselves at an exhibition of "fighting animals" at the Barrière du Combat: "I had remained till the close of the exhibition with some violence to my feelings, and I was very glad to get away. Nothing would tempt me to expose myself to a similar disgust again. How the intelligent and gentlemanly Englishmen whom I saw there, and whom I have since met in the most refined Society of Paris, can make themselves familiar, as they evidently were, with a scene so brutal, I cannot very well

¹²⁰ Mirror, X (July 7, 1832), 4.

conceive."¹²¹ As he traveled down the Saône, Willis praised the French for their cookery—he ate a delectable pâté de foie gras and an omelette soufflé in a little hotel near Chalons;¹²² for their art—Willis especially noted the religious art represented in sculptures of the Virgin and the French cathedrals;¹²³ and for their charm—Willis never tired of exclaiming at the atmosphere of Paris and the "engaging manners of Parisiennes."¹²⁴ Yet after such commendatory passages Willis never failed to point out that however fine the cookery, the art, or the charm, it could not compare with America's. French scenery along the Saône is pretty, declared Willis in Number Twenty-Three of the "Letters," but our American rivers

are lovely, because the outline of the shore is graceful, and particularly because the vegetation is luxuriant. The hills are green, the foliage deep and lavish, the rocks grown over with vines or moss, the mountains in the distance covered with pines and other forest trees; every thing is wild, and nothing looks bare or sterile. The rivers of France are crowned on every height with ruins, and in the bosom of every valley lies a cluster of picturesque stone cottages; but the fields are naked, and there are no trees; the mountains are barren and brown, and every thing looks as if the dwellings had been deserted by the people, and nature had at the same time gone to decay.¹²⁵

¹²¹ Mirror, IX (March 4, 1832), 276.

¹²² Mirror, X (July 21, 1832), 20.

¹²³ Mirror, X (July 28, 1832), 28.

¹²⁴ Mirror, X (August 4, 1832), 36.

¹²⁵ Mirror, X (July 28, 1832), 28.

In such a passage can be seen another evidence of Willis's craftsmanship to add to those already mentioned. There are ideas in Willis's essays, as there are in Irving's and in Paulding's. And this is the quality that most clearly lifts the work of the Knickerbocker essayists above the products of the hordes of scribblers who invaded the periodicals of the era. Despite his self-conscious defense of things American and his overplayed devotion to and praise of Cooper and his work--mannerisms which indeed smack of the scribbler--Willis is not vapid. He perceives as he observes; and he does both well. This is not to imply subtlety, for Willis is not subtle. But subtlety is no prerequisite for the expression of ideas. One sees easily behind the competent surface description of French and American mountains, rivers, and towns into the broader premise of difference between Old and New World; between maturity and all it implies--richness, stability, judgment, savor, wisdom, manners, soberness--and youth and all it implies--verve, vigor, movement, newness, roughness, indecision, originality.

One inevitably returns here to Willis's style, which perfectly complements his ideas. For the age it was plain indeed; even more than a century later it resists the dating that Della Cruscanism, over-punctuation, thoughtless imitation, and imperfect craftsmanship imposed upon the writings of the day. In short, as evidenced in the following well-wrought passage, Willis's best writing escapes the

boundaries of age and mannerism:

Naturally the shores at this part of the Saône are exceedingly like the highlands of the Hudson above West Point. Abrupt hills rise from the river's edge, and the windings are sharp and constant. But imagine the highlands of the Hudson crowded with antique chateaux, and covered to the very top with terraces and summer-houses and hanging-gardens, gravel walks, and beds of flowers, instead of wild pines and precipices, and you may get a very correct idea of the Saône above Lyons.¹²⁶

Other Knickerbocker Essayists. There were, of course, other Knickerbocker writers besides those just discussed whose essays found column space in the New-York Mirror, in the Knickerbocker Magazine, and in the various other periodicals, annuals, and gift books published in New York City and along the Eastern Seaboard. Yet because these writers were not primarily familiar essayists, or for the reason that even in a secondary way the total number of familiar essays produced by any one of them was not sufficient to warrant individual treatment, it seems best to handle them briefly as a group.

Like Paulding, these writers were versatile jacks-of-all-trades who, were it not for the pejorative overtone of the term, might well be referred to as magazinists, for despite some separately published volumes of poetry, tales, essays, or miscellaneous pieces, the larger portion of

¹²⁶ Mirror, X (July 28, 1832), 28.

their work saw print in the contemporary periodicals. Among them were poets: Samuel Woodworth, Lydia Sigourney, Fitz-Greene Halleck, Charles Sprague, Prosper Montgomery Wetmore; tale-writers: William Leete Stone, Grenville Mellen, Robert Charles Sands, William Leggett; scholars: Gulian C. Verplanck, Samuel L. Knapp; or formal essayists: James Eastburn, Mordecai M. Noah, John Inman. And even three of the foremost dramatists of the era--Robert Montgomery Bird, John Howard Payne, and James Nelson Barker--and one producer of plays, James H. Hackett, found time to write some verse and some short prose pieces to contribute to contemporary periodicals and annuals.

Perhaps the most noteworthy difference between this group of occasional essayists and the group which includes Paulding, Willis, Cox, and Fay, is that they were occasional essayists in the proper sense of that word. No one of them wrote more than a dozen or two essays which have come to light in the research for this study.¹²⁷ Yet this is not to imply that what they did write was of poorer quality than, say, Cox's or Willis's weekly efforts. Robert Sands's "Association" or "Scenes in Washington," are quite as well

¹²⁷ It is probable that a thorough investigation of every source for the era would reveal some additional essays by these authors, for they were, as has been said, regular and prolific contributors to periodicals and annuals. Yet the fact remains that since none of them was an essayist by preference, it seems doubtful that any significant number of essays--a number large enough to alter materially the generalizations drawn from material already gathered--has been overlooked.

written as some of Willis's "Pencillings" and actually better than most of Fay's Dreams and Reveries. Though Lydia Sigourney's "sketches" drip with sentimentalism and unabashedly use every emotion-provoking device to wring the last sigh or tear from fervid female readers, they exhibit a control of language superior to Paulding's in some of the Letters from the South. And though Grenville Mellen could not wield the weapon of satire and burlesque sufficiently well to match Paulding's or Cox's most effective essays, he was craftsman enough to startle the readers of his Sad Tales and Glad Tales (1828) with roguish comment about the nation's capital in 1825.

For subject matter these essayists probed no unique fields. They joined the weekly Mirror regulars in their comments on fashion, money and matrimony, travel; their satire of social foibles; and especially in their (moral) pursuit of pleasure. Mrs. Sigourney's "I Have Seen an End of All Perfection" urged that the heart receive instruction through moral living as earnestly as T. S. Fay's "Humility and Perseverance," or his early piece, "Manner," did.¹²⁸ Grenville Mellen's "A Scene in the Catskill Mountains," so popular with American periodical editors that it was reprinted in three different publications within a short

¹²⁸ George B. Cheever, ed., The American Common-Place Book of Prose (Boston, 1828), pp. 461-464.

T. S. Fay, Dreams and Reveries, II, 132-133.
New-York Mirror, I (August 16, 1823), 18.

time, contained as many complimentary remarks about the grandeur and beauty of the Highlands of the Hudson as did Willis's paragraphs in one of his "Pencillings" which compare the American river to the French Saône.¹²⁹ Mellen's "The Palisadoes," which was the first long narrative essay in his Sad Tales and Glad Tales, dealt with the same locale in equally felicitous tones, and it seemed equally popular, too, being reprinted in the first volume of the Legendary,¹³⁰ edited by Willis, and later in the New-York Mirror.

Robert C. Sands's "Scenes in Washington" and his "Reminiscences of New-York," both of which first appeared under the pseudonym "Francis Herbert" in The Talisman for 1830, are as amusingly critical of ladies' dress and gentlemen's dilettantisms as the original Salmagundi or William Cox's "A Walk in Broadway" and his "Philadelphia, New-York and Boston."¹³¹

¹²⁹ Mellen's essay appeared in The Token for 1828 (Boston, 1827), pp. 116-126, in Cheever's Common-Place Book (Boston, 1828), pp. 459-460 [an excerpt], and in the Pearl, III (April 26, 1834), 154. For Willis's essay see New-York Mirror, X (July 28, 1832), 28.

¹³⁰ Sad Tales and Glad Tales (New York, 1828), pp. 5-38; The Legendary (Boston, 1828), I, 162-192; New-York Mirror, IX (October 15, 1831), 113-114.

¹³¹ The Talisman for 1830 (New York, 1829), pp. 118-195, 337-358. For other essays by Sands, see his Writings in Prose and Verse, 2 vols. (New York, 1834), ed. W. C. Bryant and G. C. Verplanck. For Cox's essays, see Crayon Sketches, I, 96-106, 190-199.

The themes for these essayists' work, in fine, were unchanged. Only the essayists' names, occasionally the treatment, and sometimes the style, were different.

Devices, too, were the same familiar ones. The series, "The Journal of a Veteran Officer," which was printed in the Mirror during the first six months of 1835, used a "trip" through the South and West as a framework for comment on "American Scenery and Character," including literary figures--Irving, Catherine Sedgwick, James G. Percival, Paulding, Halleck, Lydia Sigourney, Gulian Verplanck; famous places and things--Transylvania University, the frigate Philadelphia, Mt. Vernon, "the spirit of the American people"; perennially favorite subjects--"A Bachelor's Table," "Lovers in Disguise," the spring of Ponce de Leon; and national figures in government, law, and education--Timothy Flint, Dr. Charles Caldwell, General Jackson, Edward Everett.¹³² Mordecai M. Noah preferred the character device for his series in the same volume, using "The Bashful Man" and "The Bashful Woman," "The City Gentleman and the Country Girl" as figures much akin to those of "The Schoolmaster" and "The Busy Man" used by Irving in Bracebridge Hall.¹³³ And John Inman found the reverie and the anecdote

¹³² New-York Mirror, XII (February 7, 1835 through May 16, 1835), 249, 261, 270, 277, 293, 301, 317-318, 325, 349-350, 365.

¹³³ Mirror, XII (February 7, 1835 through May 16, 1835), 272, 282-283, 291, 298-299, 336, 355.

as convenient a pair of devices as T. S. Fay had.¹³⁴

The strong tone of Americanism had not ebbed one whit in the work of this group of essayists. Early in 1835, as if to begin the new year with a reminder to contributors of their obligation in this matter, George Morris reprinted entire Irving's essay from the Sketch Book, "English Writers on America," with the following comment in the editor's column:

We have copied on the first page of the present number, an admirable paper under this title, in which the feelings that ought to govern those who undertake to impart to their own countrymen, knowledge of other lands, are beautifully, and withal, justly pointed out. It is a chapter of wise counsel, both to writers and those of whom they write; and it is much to be regretted that the good effects which might have been expected from it, in leading to a better state of opinion and of feeling between the English and American people, have not been obtained to so great an extent as could be wished.¹³⁵

Contributors heeded the admonition. N. P. Willis's "Slingsby" sketches, which were being written for the New Monthly Magazine, the Court Magazine, and the Metropolitan Magazine in England, were now about American places and things--Nahant, Swallow's Cave, Cape Cod--and were reprinted

¹³⁴ Mirror, XII (August 9, 1834), 42; (December 27, 1834), p. 206; (March 28, 1835), pp. 306-307.

¹³⁵ XII (January 24, 1835), 233-234, 239.

by the Mirror.¹³⁶ The new Harper's edition of Paulding's Complete Works was announced on January 31, 1835, and commented on very favorably by the Mirror at the beginning of a long series of excerpts from it.¹³⁷ The "Journal of a Veteran Officer" series, mentioned earlier, now turned its attention wholly to American men of letters, national figures, and places of interest.¹³⁸ A new column, "Tales Now First Published in America," was instituted, and as usual in such columns, was devoted not only to tales but also to biographical-narrative sketches, sketches, and essays.¹³⁹

As persistent as the Americanism, the morality which in this period had found its most frequent expression in the ubiquitous familiar essay, had not disappeared, although in the work of these writers as in that of the more prolific Mirror essayists the coating of morality has had

¹³⁶ XII (September 27, 1834), 98-99; XII (January 31, 1835), 241-242; (February 14, 1835), 257-258. The Mirror did not hesitate to point out to readers that Willis's essays were "received with the utmost punctuality, and they not unfrequently reach us even before they are issued from the London press. . . . Everything new from his pen, will be inserted with as much expedition as circumstances will warrant" [XII (April 25, 1835), 343].

¹³⁷ XII (February 7, 1835), 248-249.

¹³⁸ See, for example, XII (February 7, 1835), 249.

¹³⁹ XII (February 21, 1835), 266-267: a tale, "The Carrier Pigeon. Chapter the First," by James Sheridan Knowles. On April 11 (pp. 322-323) a biographical-narrative sketch, "Canova's Courtship," unsigned. On April 25 (pp. 338-339), a sketch, "The Widow," unsigned. On May 30 (pp. 377-379), an essay, "My Books," signed V. E. P. U. I., with encomiums to Washington Irving.

some of its heaviness replaced by sentimentalism.¹⁴⁰ The indefatigable exhorter, Mordecai Noah, who as editor trumpeted directions for correct living from the masthead of the New York Evening Star, had the satisfaction of seeing his admonitions reprinted in the Mirror as often as Mrs. Sigourney's. Sentimental and pious excerpts from Catherine Sedgwick's The Linwoods and from R. M. Bird's The Hawks of Hawk-Hollow shared the column space with an occasional moral essay by William Dunlap and Gulian Verplanck, and even the notoriously reserved Samuel Knapp left his studies of American literature long enough to contribute a moral lesson, "Precocious Genius."¹⁴¹

The style of these moral essays nevertheless continues to reflect the influence of the sermon in structure, diction, and tone as clearly as did the style of the anonymous essays discussed in Chapter Three. If one wished to exhort,

¹⁴⁰ Although the work of the moralists was discussed at length in Chapter Three of this study, it is necessary here to return to the subject briefly for three reasons: the moral essayists treated in this chapter produced work of decidedly better caliber than that published by the earlier writers mentioned earlier; the militant tone of the earlier essays is no longer so evident, having been replaced in these essays by a more personal and heavily sentimental one. Finally, moralists like Lydia Sigourney and Timothy Flint, however second-rate many of their writings were, achieved national distinction in the era, and thus deserve separate attention.

¹⁴¹ For references cited in this paragraph see the following:
 Sedgwick: X (May 18, 1833), 362; XIII (August 15, 1835), 51.
 Bird: XIII (September 26, 1835), 98-99.
 Dunlap: "Fables of Great Men," XII (January 24, 1835), 237-238.
 Verplanck: "An Autumnal Evening," XII (March 28, 1835), 305-306.
 Knapp: XII (March 28, 1835), 310-311.

one wrote hortatorily, with exclamatory "Oh!" or, more piously, "Oh! my dear reader"; with the rhetorical question followed by an illustrative anecdote, which was unmistakably a parable or exemplum; with the lesson to be learned emphatically restated at the close. Such was the pattern, for example, of Mordecai Noah's "The City Gentleman and the Country Girl," which retold Irving's "The Pride of the Village" with only the surface features altered: Irving's young officer became a Broadway Beau Brummel, the blushing May Queen an equally artless Dutch farm girl, and "the remote county of England" a Hudson River village. Noah's rake reformed, too, just as Irving's officer did, but in time to save the maid from death so that the essay could point triumphantly to the influence of Innocence (good) upon Worldliness (not evil, really, but badly discolored).¹⁴²

The King James Version was the mine for the moralist's diction. "For the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth," chanted Mrs. Sigourney from Genesis VIII; "Let thine heart receive instruction, for thou hast seen an end of all perfection." Then follows the heart-rending parable of a beautiful girl who had died as the result of seduction. At her grave the burial service from the Book of Common Prayer is read, and the essayist concludes: "They covered her with the damp soil and the cold clods of the valley;

¹⁴² XII (May 9, 1835), 355.

and the worms crowded into her silent abode."¹⁴³ But an actual quotation from the Bible, although frequently used, was not necessary; the same effect could be achieved by echoes of Biblical diction within an allegorical or sentimental framework:

The old man lay down to die, and when his soul went forth from the body, the angels took it. And Memory walked with it through the open gate of heaven. But Hope lay down at its threshold, and gently expired, as a rose giveth out its last odours. Her parting sigh was like the music of a seraph's harp. She breathed it into the bosom of a glorious form, and said: "Immortal happiness! I bring thee a soul that I have led through the world. It is now thine. Jesus hath redeemed it."¹⁴⁴

On occasion the Biblical diction, allegory, sentimentalism, and an unmistakably moral lesson were mixed together in the same sketch--with pungent effect. The Reverend Timothy Flint, aghast at the irreligious atmosphere of the Lowell factories and at the "blanched faces" of the factory girls who labored as though they were part of the machinery, wrote numerous essays and treatises urging more religious zeal and enlarged philanthropy in

¹⁴³ "I Have Seen an End of All Perfection," American Common-Place Book, pp. 461-463.

¹⁴⁴ "Hope and Memory," New-York Mirror, XII (April 28, 1835), 344.

their behalf.¹⁴⁵ His "The Blind Grandfather," an amorphous sketch-essay-tale-lesson-sermon was printed in the 1833 Token.¹⁴⁶ Using the device of the journey and the additional contrivance of story-telling to pass the time, Flint "retells" a story told him by an old man who, like Coleridge's ancient mariner, has committed a sin and tells the tale as part of his penance. Meant to be a shattering succession of climaxes each designed to teach a lesson, the piece is effusively sentimental, melodramatic, and unrestrained, and each lesson is hammered home with ponderous blows. The grandfather, when a youth, had been vacillating, indecisive, unable to find a profession to suit him. "I wanted energy and firmness of purpose; and that is wanting every thing" (p. 256). This essential weakness was compounded when "I added to my own inefficiency for any useful pursuit the shrinking sensibility of a girl, still less fitted to struggle with the world than myself" (p. 255). The couple emigrated to the West, and in the purity of their new rustic existence "began to contract that passionate adoration for nature, which soon became, along with the growing love of my wife, and a daughter that

¹⁴⁵ John E. Kirkpatrick, Timothy Flint, Pioneer, Missionary, Author, Editor (Cleveland, 1911), pp. 204-205. See also Flint's "Reminiscence of a Recent Journey from Cincinnati to Boston," Knickerbocker Magazine, II (October 1833), 242-263.

¹⁴⁶ pp. 250-264; further page references to this story are included in the text.

was born to us, not only a fund of contentment, but even satisfaction and joy" (p. 257). But transgressions of youth and the central flaw of irresolution must be paid for. The halcyon existence is destroyed by a fearful thunderstorm during which a lightning bolt kills the young mother, blinds the father, and instills in the baby a lasting fear of thunder. In Flint's words:

An unsupportable radiance scorched across my forehead, and I fell unconscious. At midnight I regained my recollection and sensation, by hearing the screams of our little one. She was almost spent with moaning, "father, father! mother, mother! please to wake up." I felt that something strange and terrible had happened. There was excessive pain in my head, and agony in my eyes. "Alas!" I said, "I have been struck with lightning. The visual nerves are scorched. I shall never see more." As soon as I answered the little one, she felt her way to me, threw her arms about my neck. "Dear papa," she said, "I thought I should never wake you." Think how terrible was the stillness of the mother! I moved myself round, and began to grope my hands in the darkness. They soon fell upon a face as cold as clay. Oh! God, thou art just and righteous (pp. 258-259).

More incidents and more lessons follow. The blinded man accepts his punishment, and his life is made cheerier by the child Ruth, who grows in beauty and radiance only to be seduced by an itinerant land speculator. Says Flint, "the lamb . . . ought early to be instructed, that wolves are abroad" (p. 262). The illegitimate child is born but cannot be christened. When the unwed mother relates "all

the circumstances of its birth, that modesty would allow," the minister to whom the child is brought for this important rite demurs. Then the blind man commits the greatest sin:

I told him to go, and make converts in some other place. I will be to thee, I said, my dear Ruth, father, priest, husband. I will give the child a christian [sic] name, and devote it to the deliverer from sin, and the conqueror of death. She led me, of a beautiful sabbath evening, to that spring branch, that you crossed stranger, on your way hither. I took the little one in my arms. Thou art called Ruth, I said, in the name of thy heavenly father and of thy Redeemer, and I poured the spring water from my open palm upon the tiny and shrinking face (p. 263).

Even though the child's birth "opened new and slumbering fountains, hitherto undiscovered in her bosom!" the mother dies that same evening. She is discovered the next morning: "A presentiment of horror impelled me to the bed. Her babe was nursing the cold and lifeless bosom; that babe became, what you now see in my grand daughter. I beseech thee, Ruth, restrain thy tears, God survives, although thy aged grandfather, must shortly go down to the dust" (p. 264).

It is idle to enumerate the moral points made in excess, line by line, throughout the piece. What is more important is that these lessons are taught not only by precept, anecdote, and situation but also by implications in the language of church ritual, the golden rule, and the inevitability of punishment for error. And underlying it

all is the thematic suggestion of man's punishment for assumption of powers belonging only to God, a theme used so artistically by Hawthorne in our period.

Another generalization emerges from a wide reading of these pieces. There is in them the distinct drive toward realism, not only of incident but also of the description of persons, places, and things. Although some flashes of this are discernible in the Addisonian imitations, especially in the diatribes against intemperance and seduction, it is more striking in these essays and sketches by writers who were not primarily essayists but tale writers and fabulists. Sentimentalism, allegory, and moral didacticism--sometimes even romance--of course coat them thickly; but beneath this layer may be seen evidences of the writers' urge to describe to the reader every detail of each character's person, dress, and traits; to lead the reader step by step through each incident, even pausing to explain the why and the how of specific movements and occurrences; to expound at length; to anatomize subjective reaction objectively. Mrs. Flint's sketch provides clear evidence of this. Sigourney's essays, on the other hand, are as a rule more concerned with fable, allegory, and sermon. But in another essay in the 1833 Token:

There rippled by my grandmother's mansion
the outlet of a little spring, with two
feet of water in some of its curves or
'bends.' Much has my uncle [sic] Paul to
answer for, in making for me a hook of a

cast steel pin, a line of packthread, and a rod from the twig of a tree. Scarcely had this gear touched the water, before a little fish was flapping on the bank. I ran off with it as unconscious of every thing but a pleasing emotion, as though I had breathed exhilarating gas.¹⁴⁷

Or consider this passage from "The Fur Cloak: A Reminiscence" for its detail:

I can still see him, as I saw him then, pale, emaciated, wounded; his almost fragile form reclined upon a couch, supported by pillows, with a little table drawn close beside him, on which he leaned his elbow, supporting his head on his hand; that wounded head around which he wore a bandage of black riband, instead of the laurel wreath he had so nobly worn. But the indelible scar, which that bandage covered, was the seal of glory.¹⁴⁸

Or, as a nauseous climax, this:

The official attendants, acquainted with these subjects, immediately conjectured, that the operation of opening this body must have been performed with a knife struck with a hammer. The arms were still hanging to their respective pieces of the breast, they were livid, and the blood had settled under some parts of the skin, but here also, no injury had been done to the bones. Below the ribs, the vertebra of the back bone had been cut through, and thus the lower part of the body had been severed from its upper part; the first was found wrapped in a dark red petticoat, and when this was taken away, both legs were found cut off above the knee joint, one lay between the thighs, and the other by

¹⁴⁷ Anon., "Trout Fishing," p. 339.

¹⁴⁸ The Token for 1833 (Boston, 1832), p. 344.

the side of the left thigh. All the muscles of the abdomen, and even the ossa pubis, had been cut asunder. None of the viscera of the abdomen were to be found; they were afterwards, particularly the stomach and the caul, discovered in the dung heap.¹⁴⁹

As reinforcement for this realism writers favored mono- or disyllabic words and words of specific rather than abstract denotation. In the passages above there are few polysyllables, and those which are there are familiar ones: grandmother, unconscious, exhilarating, emaciated, indelible, official, attendants, etc. The abstractions are equally rare, even if selected on the basis of an extremely loose definition. Is there even one such in the last selection? It is clear, too, that the predilection of the age for the comma to set off every prepositional phrase and every noun clause as subject or object, was an additional force for explicit narration.

It is easy to see what the amateur essayists were seeking to achieve in their wildly Della Cruscan flights when their pretentious products are compared to the sonorous prose that rolled and echoed in the essays of Gulian Verplanck. Emersonian in elegance, Vaughan-like in depth, and Augustan in tone and structure, these passages from "An Autumnal Evening," in praise of the painter Weir and the poet Bryant, provide their own organ accompaniment. Weir's picture is of a lake

¹⁴⁹ Anon., "Andrew Bichel, the Butcher of Girls," Knickerbocker Magazine, II (October 1833), 272-273.

surrounded by steep, rocky banks, from which the only view is that of the dark quiet water at your feet, the sky above your head, and the summits of neighbouring mountains encircling the horizon. It is begirt with the primeval mountain forest, which bears no trace of having ever been touched by any human hand. . . . Neither adding to nor varying from what he saw before him, [Weir] has clothed and imbued that literal truth with the expression, the sentiment, the poetry, which the season, the hour, the seclusion of the scene, the very temperature of the air and the silence of the spot, all unite to breath[e] into the soul.

However, continued Verplanck, Weir had portrayed from life what Bryant had earlier portrayed "with imaginative ideality of expression and effect":

Who like Bryant can make you perceive some invisible breath, swaying at once all those lofty, green tops, until you feel your own spirit bowed down with the poet's,

--By the thought of boundless power
And inaccessible majesty.

Or who like him can describe the beautiful, boundless unshorn fields of our western prairies, the gardens of the desert, crowding the mind with image after image of surpassing loveliness or grandeur, all bright and redolent. . . . Who like him depicts the thousand exquisite peculiarities of our gorgeous and many-colored autumn? . . . What a vein of natural piety, deep and thoughtful, yet manly, cheerful, and confiding, runs through his Thanatopsis, his Burial-Place, his Forest Hymn and that to Death! . . . Their language and versification remind us of Gray, exquisitely polished, yet showing the poet's labour only by their perfection, but the thoughts breathe a truly original, philosophical and Miltonick eloquence that Gray himself never reached. Its train of majestick conceptions passes along

before us, as in a sad and stately procession. There are the glorious past ages, and the old empires wrapped in sul-
lenness and gloom, silent fame, lost arts,
forgotten wisdom, labours of good to man,
beauty and excellence unknown, 'earth's
wonder and her pride,' and all the pageant
of man's life, gliding onward to the dim
dominions of the unrelenting Past; as
though we saw through the gloom of long
gone ages, the funeral pomp of some mighty
sovereign of the early world, Belus, or
Ninus or Semiramis, Cyaxares, or Pharaoh,
with all their imperial power and magnifi-
cence, moving solemnly onward toward the
tombs of their fathers, to the sound of
grand and melancholy music.¹⁵⁰

Like Verplanck, Samuel Knapp wrote stately prose.

His essay on "Precocious Genius" concludes:

There is sometimes a power altogether be-
yond calculation, that is incorporated
with the character of an individual.
David, who was educated in rural simplicity
among the sheep folds of his father, was
as great a man as his son Solomon, who had
masters of the highest order around him,
from his cradle; and in our times, we know
that the sons of O. L. P. T., and so on
through the alphabet, who were dipped in
the waters of knowledge from their birth,
are displaced by some of those mighty
spirits who have come down from the moun-
tains of the north. . . . There will be
Napoleons, Denons, and Cuviers in spite of
all rules for making great men which were
ever laid down. These novi homines are
constantly coming forth and building up
new families. You do not want your son,
according to the Chinese rule, to ennoble
your ancestors, as men of mind; they have
done that for themselves.¹⁵¹

¹⁵⁰ New-York Mirror, XII (March 28, 1835), 305.

¹⁵¹ New-York Mirror, XII (March 28, 1835), 311.

But Knapp more regularly sought for balance than for grandiloquence or sonorousness, thus echoing the Rambler and Dr. Johnson. Earlier in the "Genius" essay Knapp's symmetry of sentence and paragraph structure is precise to a fault:

I had a classmate who entered college, but a few months turned of eight years of age, and of course he graduated at twelve. He was rather small of his age, having been crammed with learning from the second year of his existence. In the recitation-room, although hardly strong enough to hold his book, he was not a whit behind a majority of his classmates. In the languages he was conspicuous. Every one prophesied that when his class should come to the higher branches of knowledge, he would fall off. It was not so; he was able, with but ordinary exertions, to keep up with the rest. He wrote with sprightliness, and not unfrequently with great ingenuity. He was a poet, whose verses flowed easily, were not destitute of strength and point. He could imitate almost any style, with a close adherence to the original matter. His perception of character was excellent, and he could hit off many of his classmates with truth and spirit. His manners were constantly changing; sometimes he was as gay as a common boy of his age, and then he would become as sage as a professor. He wrote satirical verses with great effect, and but few dared offend him (p. 310).

Finally, all these qualities of the essay revealed in the selections given above reflect the essentially conservative position of the New-York Mirror. Though by no means the only periodical to which this group of writers contributed--Lewis Clark's Knickerbocker, the Buckinghams' New-England Magazine, Mordecai Noah's New York Evening Star

and earlier his Chronicle, Bryant's United States Review and Literary Gazette, and Goodrich's several annuals were other favorite outlets--during the decade of the 1820's the Mirror was both social mentor and literary leader, a firm position it did not relinquish in the early years of the 1830's even though the Knickerbocker (January 1833), the New-England Magazine (July 1831), and Godey's (July 1830) offered serious challenge almost from their establishment dates. That the gentlemanly Irving, the unpredictable Willis, and the sharp-tongued Cox had given warnings of public dissatisfaction with the old formula for all sorts of short prose seemed not to matter. As late as 1835, when one of the Mirror's regulars, John Harris, protested that any similarity between the coquettes and dandies in his essays and actual people was purely coincidental and that no one should identify himself with any of these scurrilous characters used in the essays to criticize social foibles, the Mirror added this paragraph:

A public essayist cannot hit off characters, or write such compositions as are calculated to correct the follies of the times, without furnishing many drawings, of which likenesses may be found in society. If he paint a coquet, although of this animal there are certainly many varieties, there is still a general similarity pervading the whole class; and the more people whom he offends, by exhibiting his picture to the world, the more likely it is that he has drawn a true one. No modest woman will be hurt at seeing it, because in it she will discover not even an attempt to delineate her own features. Even if she were told that it was intended for

herself, she would smile at the folly of the artist, and leave him to his fate. We think that the dilemma of Mr. Harris is rather complimentary to him, and the sincerest acknowledgment of his skill; and, although we desire not to be either invidious or uncharitable, yet we must say, that they who find fault and get angry at him, are not without a secret consciousness that he has hit off some of their peculiarities truly. In his future efforts, we recommend him to persevere faithfully and fearlessly in lashing every thing like vice or folly, no matter who may think themselves wronged or insulted. . . .¹⁵²

And the Mirror's conservative position is further evidenced in the argument the editors used to espouse the first regular publication of Sunday newspapers in New York City: "We look upon this measure as not only harmless, but very laudable, and proof against any objections that can be urged against it. . . . A Sunday journal can be made the vehicle of disseminating sound information and instruction in morals and literature, and can be made a usual auxiliary to the pulpit, and the professedly religious periodicals."¹⁵³

Attacks on the tested formula were dealt with in various ways. A plea from Irving was impolitic if not impossible to refute; the editors conveniently forgot it. When Cox's tongue became too sharp, he was bundled off to England as a "special correspondent" with the additional sop of having a collection of his essays published under the auspices of

¹⁵² X (January 5, 1833), 214.

¹⁵³ XIII (August 8, 1835), 47.

the Mirror--and under the editorship of the conservative, obedient T. S. Fay, who was also there to dull the bite of Cox's acid with an unguent preface to Crayon Sketches. Willis, too, was sent to Europe, "with expenses," leaving Morris and Fay with not only the proverbial nine points of possession and control but also the tenth one: any correspondence--articles, essays, "impressions," tales, poems, or comments from the men abroad--could be blue-penciled into line with established procedure.¹⁵⁴ When, however, a controversial opinion by a writer of note not on the Mirror's staff had to be printed, the editors could in a headnote disclaim responsibility for "the opinions here written" or they could express their dissatisfaction with the ideas in the piece by inserting ameliorative or even argumentative footnotes. The Mirror, reiterating its desire to avoid controversial political issues, felt nevertheless constrained to print Judge Brackenridge's "The Southern States" in the issue for December 24, 1831. For this essay George Morris composed the following headnote:

¹⁵⁴ See, for example, Fay's explanatory headnote to Cox's "Marriageable Ladies" essay, X (June 1, 1833), 381: "No intelligent reader can misunderstand the pleasantry of the following communication. It takes a novel and ludicrous view (although on the wrong side), of a subject which is, by no means, deserving of ridicule. Temperance societies have certainly wrought the most beneficial effects upon the nation."

Although we do not subscribe to all the opinions expressed in the following article, and never mingle in party politics, we still feel no hesitation in complying with the writer's request, and give it a place. It being our constant endeavor to make the Mirror a paper of general interest, we do not feel ourselves altogether at liberty to reject well-written essays, discussing in a frank and temperate manner, any subject of political economy, merely because some of their sentiments may clash with our own private opinions, or, if the reader prefers the word--prejudices. In the present instance the author is a gentleman of elevated standing in the republic of letters, and, as his name is published with his communication, the reader will be kind enough to hold him, and not the editors of this journal, responsible for what he as here written.¹⁵⁵

Here Morris has cleverly turned the (to him) distasteful article to his advantage. The Mirror recognizes good writing when it sees it, the headnote clearly says; it also recognizes and respects requests from known writers; it has its readers' interests at heart; it is "democratic." And it has also protected itself perfectly: if reaction to the article is adverse, Brackenridge will be the butt for the obloquy; if favorable, the Mirror can point to its acumen in allowing it to be printed for all the stated and implied reasons in the headnote.

The outspoken and well known George Bancroft took a dim view of "this tendency to moralize, which many mistake in themselves for wise observation." He called it "the

¹⁵⁵ IX (December 14, 1831), 196.

mark of an inferior mind to be constantly repeating the common-places of morality: one, who does it often, is sure to be esteemed by his neighbours as a tedious proser." Morality must not, he continued, be used to dignify minutiae:

In that which is to produce a grand effect, every thing must be proportionably [sic] grand. The historians of nature tell us, that gold is diffused throughout creation, may be extracted from the stones we tread upon, and enters into the composition of the plants on which we feed. But it is a very slow and troublesome process to extract it . . . and after all, it is obtained in so small quantities, that it is not worth the trouble it costs. And it may be so with the elements of poetry. They exist every where; the dreams of the drunkard may sometimes have the gleam of bright fancy; a mother, setting out in pursuit of an idiot boy, who has run away on an ass, may have proper thoughts, and weep as sincerely as Andromache herself; and the Reformation of a knave like Peter Bell may be psychologically as remarkable as the downfall of Macbeth, the scepticism of Hamlet, the madness of Lear. But still it is not the thing we want. . . . If we hear of a blind boy, who goes to sea in a shell, we should think the story would make a very curious and proper paragraph for the miscellaneous department of a newspaper, provided the fact be well authenticated; but what is there of poetry about it?¹⁵⁶

But Bancroft had made the mistake of criticizing Wordsworth sharply enough to arouse George B. Cheever who, as editor of the Common-Place Book, though he found Bancroft's essay

¹⁵⁶ "The Morality of Poetry," American Common-Place Book, p. 259.

good enough prose to print could not allow the author of The Excursion to go undefended. Mr. Bancroft is entitled to his opinion, asserted Cheever in an editorial footnote to the essay, but trifling as these subjects may appear, "if related in the common and desultory manner of a newspaper paragraph, [they have] yet been wrought, by the genius of Wordsworth, into . . . the most beautiful and natural pieces of poetry which it has been our lot to meet with."¹⁵⁷

Adulation of Washington Irving appears in the writings of this occasional group as regularly as in the more prolific weekly contributors. Borrowings too, and echoes, sound as frequently. M. M. Noah, as we have seen, used Irving's "The Pride of the Village" as basis for his "The City Gentleman and the Country Girl"; others of his character essays also echo Irving's characters in Bracebridge Hall, although Noah heavily burdened them with lessons to teach--something Irving probably shuddered at. William Leete Stone had his "Uncle Zim" journey to Hazlewood to purchase a yoke of oxen from "Mr. Ishmael Crane, nephew of Ichabod Crane, the celebrated schoolmaster."¹⁵⁸ John Pierpont found Irving's work so "cultivated in literary taste" and of so "pure and lofty moral sentiment" that he

¹⁵⁷ American Common-Place Book, p. 261.

¹⁵⁸ "Uncle Zim and Deacon Pettibone," Atlantic Club Book, II, p. 133.

included "The Voyage," "The Widow and Her Son," an excerpt from Knickerbocker's History, one from "Rural Funerals," and one from "The Country Church" in his The American First Class Book.¹⁵⁹ George Morris finally secured permission to print something by Irving before it had appeared elsewhere. With appropriate alarums "The Honey Camp" and "A Bee Hunt" were published in the Mirror three months before A Tour on the Prairies was issued.¹⁶⁰

It is certainly not surprising, then, to find the names of most of these essayists on the list of guests who attended the Irving Testimonial Dinner on May 30, 1832, in the great saloon of the City Hotel in New York City. Some proposed toasts: Paulding, Philip Hone, M. M. Noah, P. M. Wetmore, William Leggett; others sent letters to be read: Verplanck, Knapp, Charles Fenno Hoffman; others were content merely to glow in the aura of literary and national renown produced by the assembled three hundred. After a dozen "regular toasts"--to the President of the United States; to "literature, commerce, and the Union"; to the "Triumphs of Intellect"; to the "Trio of Salmagundi"; to the "Pilgrim of Genius, who worships at distant shrines with incense from his own domestic scene"--and an interminable number of "volunteer toasts"--to Walter Scott, Paulding, Verplanck, Lafayette, Bryant, Cooper; to the "New-York Mirror, a

¹⁵⁹ Boston, 1823; see also 1833 edition, Preface, n.p.

¹⁶⁰ XII (April 4, 1835), 318.

gallant pioneer in the cause of American periodical literature"; to the memory of Washington; and to each one of Irving's volumes and indeed to numerous selections from these volumes--the qualities of America's first man of letters were anatomized in a 15,000-word address by John Duer, whose remarks were resoundingly cheered whenever he paused for breath. Reported the Mirror:

It was one of the most interesting entertainments ever offered in this country. The name of Washington Irving is familiar to every lip, and his delightful writings to every heart. His celebrity has been of a nature so unalloyed and universal, as to rank him with Addison, Goldsmith, and Steele; and the younger part of our community have so long been accustomed to hear of him, and to read his thoughts, without the hope of seeing his person, and listening to his voice, that the appearance of the man among us is almost like the coming to life of some of those departed poets and authors whose works enrich our libraries, and whose names are cherished as something sacred and apart from those of the living. In every way, to all parties, all ages, this festival teemed with extraordinary interest and associations. It is, indeed, seldom the lot of any one to be so warmly, so perfectly and generally beloved, as the object of these remarks. The old recollected him as a boy. The young had, at their school-desks, drunk in the aspirations of his genius, and read him by stealth behind Homer and Virgil. When we . . . [saw] the author of Rip Van Winkle, the Legend of Sleepy Hollow, the Wife, and those other beautiful creations in the Sketch-book, Salmagundi, Bracebridge Hall, and excellent old Diedrich Knickerbocker--when we followed him farther in his course over far lands, collecting the materials for "The Tales of a Traveler," [sic] and "Columbus"; and when we ran over in our mind the many a hearty laugh, the many an hour of pleasant melancholy,

which we owed to him, we felt that he truly deserved the lively gratitude and admiration which beamed from every face.¹⁶¹

Washington Irving. The New-York Mirror. Throughout the decade of the 1820's and for a few years thereafter, the names of America's first man of letters and New York City's most respected and influential periodical are the two most often heard. No official or tacit connection between them existed, yet their names were solidly linked by a kind of literary catalyst--the group of essayists who praised or were influenced by Irving and who were at the same time contributors to George Morris's weekly magazine. To call these essayists the "Irving School" is a half-truth: correct for a slavish imitator like T. S. Fay, incorrect for unpredictable independents like N. P. Willis or James Kirke Paulding. To refer to them merely as Mirror contributors is vague: despite the efforts of Morris and his assistants to standardize the intent and tone of the writings accepted for print, there is as clear a difference between the essays of Willis and Fay as between the poems of Bryant and Lydia Sigourney. But the recognition that these essayists were Irving contemporaries and were at the same time contributors to the Mirror allows proper inferences.

¹⁶¹ IX (June 9, 1832), 386. The "entire proceedings" were printed by the Mirror on this occasion; see pp. 386-387, 390-391, for data from which much of this account is taken.

In its role as militant champion of native American literature and of its most famous exponent, the Mirror brooked no opposition from writers or readers at home or abroad. On none of its more than a thousand pages is there a harsh word for either, and on those rare occasions when, as in Chancellor Kent's address at the Irving Dinner, it is hinted that some might criticize Irving for his "absenteeism" or for his "excessive use of foreign subjects," these grumblings are dismissed as mere cavils and become lost amid the accolades which inevitably follow. Contributors, then, perforce agreed with this position--if only by holding their tongues--and by such vocal or tacit agreement "joined" the Irving circle.

Neither the Mirror nor any other periodical of the age was able to print a great deal of Irving's original work, although many a periodical "excerpted" from The Sketch Book, Bracebridge Hall, and Tales of a Traveller as frequently as it dared. But the Mirror "made up" for its paucity of Irving's actual writings by regularly reporting everything else about him: beginning in 1824, hardly an issue appeared without some reference to Geoffrey Crayon. With or without Irving's consent, he had been "adopted" by the Mirror, and by extension, by the Mirror's family of readers, writers, and editors; so much so, in fact, that the man and his work quickly became the measure by which much other writing of the era--certainly most of the familiar essay writing by

contributors to the New York periodicals and much of the essay writing even in more obscure magazines--was judged.

More subjective than the militant moralists, more humane than the rabid reformers, more interested in people as they were and in his own response to his observation of people and things, Irving produced a body of essays whose impact upon his own generation and later generations of writers was forceful and lasting. Empirical evidence of this impact in the two decades after Ghent may be seen in the numbers of "Sketch Books," "Crayons" (either titles or signatures), "Travellers," sketches "by a Gent.," and other combinations and corruptions of titles and signatures affixed to ephemeral miscellanies or to single pieces written for annuals and periodicals. More of the same appears in bald borrowings of characters and situations, devices and maneuvers, subjects and themes, primarily from the Sketch Book, Bracebridge Hall, and Tales of a Traveller but also from Knickerbocker's History, Granada, and later, Crayon Miscellany. Nonetheless evident but harder to be precise about is the less tangible evidence: echoes, parallels, atmosphere, attitudes, which for the student widely read in the periodical literature of the age needs no documentation. Perhaps in connection with Irving's worst imitators it is best described by analogy: as clearly as did Hawthorne's "mob of scribbling women" rely upon stock situations, flat characters, and hackneyed conventions to

grind out literally thousand of lackluster novels in the late 1840's and '50's, so the multitude of "Gents.," "Travellers," and "Crayons" wrung dry the ideas and methods of the Sketch Book in the 1820's and '30's. For the better writers who were also Irving's contemporaries, we need a non-pejorative analogue: Henry James and the modern "psychological" novelists.

In later generations of essayists Irving's influence is reflected in George W. Curtis's Prue and I (1856) and in Donald Grant Mitchell's ("Ik Marvel's") Reveries of a Bachelor (1850) and Dream Life (1851); in Bayard Taylor's Views-A-Foot (1846) and The Lands of the Saracen (1855); in Henry T. Tuckerman's Italian Sketch Book (1835) and Leaves from the Diary of a Dreamer (1853); in Oliver Wendell Holmes's Autocrat; in Agnes Repplier's Essays in Idleness (1893) and In the Dozy Hours (1894); in Howells's Italian Journeys (1867) and London Films (1905). And it is in recognition of this final fact that the relative stature of Irving and his contemporaries comes clear. For all their industry, earnestness of purpose, and even their art, Willis, Fay, Paulding, Cox, Morris, and the rest are the exclusive property of specialists in American literature and cultural history. But there will never be an American schoolboy to whom Washington Irving does not belong.

INTERCHAPTER:

THREE EDITORIAL ESSAYISTS

In these early years of the nineteenth century, when making literature one's profession was in America little more than an exciting gamble, aspiring writers perforce turned their hands to whatever peripheral pursuits might bring in a dollar. The financial successes of Irving and Cooper, of course, had by the mid-1820's proved that a living--a good living, indeed--could be made by established writers; but becoming established was, then as now, no easy accomplishment. Thus, to eke out an existence while they waited for their stars to rise, most of the contemporaries of Irving worked in print shops (William Cox, George P. Morris), studied law (Theodore Fay, James Gordon Brooks), clerked in retail shops (Fitz-Greene Halleck), or operated their own stores (Samuel Woodworth). But by far the most sought-after, "close-to-literature" pursuit was that of editing or in some way assisting in periodical publication--a pursuit engaged in at one time by every one of these early writers.

Understandably, the non-creative labors of editing soon palled for Irving, Willis, Halleck, and the rest. Longfellow's "Let us now be up and doing" probably spoke for one after another of the Knickerbockers as they chafed

under the burden of the blue pencil and yearned for time free to write. Yet for some members of the Knickerbocker group, the job of editing and publishing was dynamic and exhilarating, and they made it rather than creative composition their first interest.

George Pope Morris. At the same time that the advancing British troops caused official Washington to scurry out of the nation's muddy capital, George Pope Morris became an apprentice in the printing shop of Samuel Woodworth in New York City. A decade later, having educated himself with the type font and the composing stick, he established, with Woodworth, the magazine which was to give the other members of the Irving group their most important early outlet, the New-York Mirror. For the first six months of its existence, the Mirror was edited by Woodworth and "published" by Morris; but in February 1824, with the twenty-eighth issue, Morris became associate editor and did most of the pencil work until the beginning of the second volume on July 31, when he assumed complete charge in name and in fact.

As editor, Morris quickly became a well-known and well-respected member of the New York literary circle. Under his aegis William Cox, Theodore Fay, Grenville Mellen, William Leggett, and Harriet Muzzy made their first contributions to American periodical literature, and later, when N. P. Willis's American Monthly Magazine ceased publication in July 1831, Morris picked up that periodical's subscription

list and invited Willis to join him on the staff of the Mirror as associate editor.¹

No stronger supporter of the "publish American writers" movement lived in New York City. The "Prospectus" for the Mirror, written by Morris and Woodworth, declared that this magazine was to be "literally and emphatically, AMERICAN" and that although some articles of "foreign origin" would be accepted, "to native genius, history, scenery, character, and incidents, we shall always give a decided preference. . . ." ² Yet these strongly expressed sentiments were not, as so many such expressions of the period were, merely chauvinistic. In his first essay for the Mirror, Morris applauded the good relations "which now seem to exist between the United States and Great Britain," expressed the wish that this felicitous atmosphere could continue, and diplomatically praised English reviewers for their astute judgment of Irving, Cooper, and Bryant.³ In a second essay he made a further move to cement these good relations by naming Campbell, Montgomery, and Bloomfield as three "modern English poets" who were not only good poets

¹ The American Monthly Magazine was only one of several magazines which were absorbed by the Mirror. Late in 1832, the Euterpiad was gobbled up [see Mirror, IX (December 24, 1832), 199], and earlier in the same year the Crystal Hunter [see Mirror, IX (January 14, 1832), 222].

² I (August 2, 1823), 1.

³ "English Opinions," I (October 25, 1823), 102.

but also moral ones.⁴

It was Morris, too, who established the Mirror's annual "Literary Prize" for the best original poem, essay, and tale, who persuaded influential clergymen, merchants, and even politicians to join literary men in acting as judges for these contests, and who by this means helped to ameliorate the feeling among men of business that literature was a not quite proper occupation.⁵ As has been said earlier, Morris's contests were strongly influential among other contemporary American periodicals, for one after another not only reprinted the Mirror's prize poems, essays, and tales with appropriately adulatory editorials appended, but also in many cases instituted contests of their own "after the manner of the Mirror."

Though by his own admission an Irving admirer, Morris was not a toady. On January 31, 1824, he noted with satisfaction that the "National Union intends to republish 'Letters of Jonathan Oldstyle,' originally published in the Morning Chronicle in 1802."⁶ But on June 19, in an otherwise highly favorable biographical and critical notice of Irving and his works, he adjudged Knickerbocker's History "a sport to many, it was not so to all; and some of the

⁴ "Moral Poets," I (November 1, 1823), 110-111.

⁵ "Literary Prizes," I (January 10, 1824), 191; see also page 199 for additional data on judges and contest rules.

⁶ I, 215.

descendants of our Dutch aborigines were not a little offended at the liberty which the author has taken with the names and manners of those whom they had been accustomed to remember with reverence and respect."⁷ His review of Catherine Sedgwick's Redwood, equally favorable, still finds points about the novel to be criticized, as does his review of Paulding's The Dutchman's Fireside and his estimate of Cooper's The Prairie.⁸

Of course, as both William Charvat and Harry H. Clark have pointed out, it was becoming the fashion in American criticism of this era to call attention to weaknesses as well as strengths, errors as well as successes, even in books written and published in the United States.⁹ That Morris, therefore, should find flaws in Redwood, Knickerbocker's History, and The Dutchman's Fireside would ordinarily indicate that not only were there flaws to be found and that Morris had perceived them, but also that he was aware of the current critical practice and was following it. Yet even at this early date in its two-decade life, the Mirror had begun to "adopt" Bryant, Irving, Paulding, Halleck, and T. S. Fay as its favorite sons, had urged them

⁷ "Washington Irving," I (June 19, 1824), 373-374.

⁸ I (June 26, 1824), 380; IX (December 24, 1832), 197.

⁹ American Critical Thought: 1810-1835, pp. 7-26; "Changing Attitudes in Early American Literary Criticism, 1800-1840," in The Development of American Literary Criticism, ed. Floyd Stovall (Chapel Hill, 1955), pp. 15-73.

to contribute to its weekly columns, and had assumed the position of stout defender of their literary reputation, individual and "American." That Morris could find fault with the work of any one of them, of Irving especially, in the face of such paternalism (editor-in-chief Samuel Woodworth was strongly pro-Irving and Paulding) is tribute not only to his sense of balance and judgment but also to his critical integrity. In short, regardless of what the modern reader may think of Morris's acumen as a reviewer, it can be demonstrated that this energetic young editor was no mere admirer of things American because they were American.

As an essayist and critic he was prolific but, despite this defense of him, unimportant; as a writer of verse, his second occupation and at least early in life his first love, he is remembered today chiefly as the author of the redoubtable "Woodman, Spare That Tree." But as the influential editor of the New-York Mirror, a magazine noteworthy for its prestige and long life in these days of ephemeral and short-lived periodicals, George Pope Morris earned his place in the canon of minor American literature.

Lewis Gaylord Clark and Willis Gaylord Clark. Twin brothers who are both successful men of letters are a rarity in any period of literature. Yet there can be no doubt as to the contemporary reputation of Lewis Gaylord Clark and Willis Gaylord Clark as prolific contributors to

gift books, other annuals, and magazines, especially those published in New York City and in Philadelphia, in the closing years of our period. Articles, poems, essays, stories, and columns bearing the signatures "L. G. C." and "W. G. C." appear in almost every issue of the Knickerbocker Magazine, the Pearl (Boston and Hartford), the New-York Mirror, the New York Evening Post, the New-York Review, the United States Literary Gazette (these last two journals united in October 1826, to become the United States Review and Literary Gazette, under the editorship of William Cullen Bryant), and the Philadelphia Album. Both men were, in addition, successful and respected editors, Willis Clark of several Philadelphia periodicals, including the Columbian Star, a religious paper, and Relf's Philadelphia Gazette,¹⁰ and Lewis Clark of the strongest local rival of George Morris's New-York Mirror after 1833, the Knickerbocker Magazine.

Founded in January 1833, under the editorship of Charles Fenno Hoffman, the Knickerbocker (throughout its first volume, January through June 1833, the magazine was titled Knickerbacker) was "to act as the usher of others into the presence of the public . . . to represent life and letters as existing here, not assume their regulation; to call out talent, not to supply it ourselves."¹¹ But

¹⁰ Taft, Minor Knickerbockers, p. 402.

¹¹ Charles Fenno Hoffman, "Introduction," I (January 1833), 7.

after only three months as editor, Hoffman fell ill, left New York on a western trip for his health, and turned over the editorial chair to Samuel Daly Langtree.¹² Langtree, in turn, after a colorless and brief stint, relinquished the post to Lewis Gaylord Clark in April 1834, after which Clark held it for a record twenty-six years, or until the explosion at Sumter.

Although Lewis Clark was known to the New York writers primarily as an editor and writer of moral tales and sketches strikingly similar in style and structure to those by Lydia Child,¹³ he was also a competent familiar essayist, attested to by his "Editor's Table" contributions to the Knickerbocker beginning in May 1834 (III, 398-400). These columns were a melange of comment on New York art exhibits; familiar essays on the seasons, manners, occupations, music and art; articles stumping for the passage of

¹² Knickerbocker, III (April 1834), 320.

¹³ Lewis Clark's "A Contrasted Picture" [Knickerbocker, III (April 1834), 281-289] ends: "READER! there is a moral in this imperfect narration of melancholy facts. However your personal power may enable you to rise above your humble condition, beware how you accomplish your elevation at the expense of rejected affection, which no gold can purchase. Beware how you suffer the ambition and pleasures which inspire you to-day, to involve you in the meshes of a web of your own inconsiderate and wicked weaving to-morrow. Remember the words of the Man of Wisdom: 'Better is it to be of an humble spirit with the lowly, than to receive the reward of the proud: for Pride goeth before Destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall'." Cf. the ending of Mrs. Child's essay quoted earlier.

international copyright laws; satirical attacks on prejudiced travel accounts by visiting Britons; equally severe attacks on incompetent or prejudiced American critics, especially critics of poetry and poets; review of and comment on newly published American and foreign books; and notices and reviews of New York drama and theatrical people.¹⁴ Although all of these "Editor's Tables" are interesting to modern students of this era, Lewis Clark's familiar essays must be singled out for primary comment here.

Following the change of season Clark wrote "Sweet May!" for the issue for May 1834 (III, 398) and "June" for the following issue (III, 476); he knew enough to provide variety, however--something many other periodical editors of the times seemed rarely to know--and waited until the November issue (IV, 408-409) before contributing another essay on the seasons, "Mornings in Autumn." February was celebrated by Clark's short "Sleigh-Riding" (V, 170); April by "The First of April" cleverly enjoying the "spirit of Comus in youth" (V, 361); and the following September by "The Schuylkill," which extolled the natural beauty of this "lovely stream" and the "delicious scenes" painted by

¹⁴ For examples of the various kinds of materials see the following:

Art: III (May 1834), 398-399
 Copyright: V (June 1835), 547-548
 Attacks on poor critics: IV (August 1834), 160
 New Books: V (March 1835), 260
 Drama: IV (October 1834), 326-327

the poetry of Thomas Moore "when he wandered with his harp on the flowery banks of this river" (VI, 278).

Other times and events of the year provided titles for Clark's essays and opportunities for him to "reflect" in print. Independence Day, 1834, Clark celebrated with "Recollections of the Month," a kind of allegorical essay in which the exploding cannon, fluttering flags, and "moving masses of humanity" become symbols of the American conflict in both the Revolution and the War of 1812. By implication, too, they are symbolic of America's struggle to find a place among the community of nations: "It is the Aeronaut, rising gracefully into the unpillared air, waving the flag of a glorious Union, beneath the huge globe whose subtile contents buoy him on. . . . Can that be the moon rising so gradually up the sky? 'Tis an illuminated balloon. Now it gleams like burnished gold, in the light of the 'silver rain' of a rocket which has exploded above it. . . . On every side, streams of light rush into mid-heaven--paling for a moment the 'ineffectual fires' of the whole host of stars."¹⁵ And the death of Lafayette in May 1834, occasioned an elegiac essay by Clark in the Knickerbocker, in which the Frenchman is given the supreme compliment: he was a real American.¹⁶

In company with other New York City editors, Lewis

¹⁵ Knickerbocker, IV (August 1834), 162-163.

¹⁶ Knickerbocker, IV (July 1834), 82-83.

Clark was an Irving partisan. Clearly the highest compliment a contemporary writer could receive from contemporary editors was that the writer had composed "the truest, the most accurate, the most spirited, the most entertaining 'Sketches,' which have issued from the American press since the days of the celebrated Geoffrey Crayon. . . ." These are Clark's words in praise of Eliza Leslie's Pencil Sketches; ¹⁷ and he repeated them with only the barest change in a review of Longfellow's one-volume Outre-Mer, ¹⁸ again in a review of the two-volume Outre-Mer, ¹⁹ in a notice of Paulding's Works, ²⁰ and in a review of Henry Junius Nott's two-volume Nouvellettes of a Traveller; or, Odds and Ends from the Knapsack of Thomas Singularity, Journeyman--Printer. ²¹ Of course, the very name of the magazine was both a tribute to Irving and a thinly veiled attempt to capitalize on Irving's tremendous popularity. ²² But until Lewis Clark assumed the post of editor, Irving had ignored the "honor," had remained aloof, and had refused to send contributions to

¹⁷ Knickerbocker, III (April 1834), 308.

¹⁸ Knickerbocker, IV (July 1834), 72-75.

¹⁹ Knickerbocker, V (May 1835), 454-456.

²⁰ Knickerbocker, V (February 1835), 169-170.

²¹ Knickerbocker, IV (October 1834), 312-313.

²² See Hoffman's "Introduction," I (January 1833), 1-14, especially pp. 11-12.

the periodical which bore his pseudonym. In spite of the efforts of Charles Fenno Hoffman and Samuel Langtree to persuade America's first writer to favor them with papers, the Knickerbocker was forced to report in glum tones that the "illustrious editor of 'Knickerbocker's History' had not honored this work (the greatest compliment which America ever paid to his genius) by any immediate contributions from his pen."²³

Willis Gaylord Clark, who joined his twin as associate editor of the Knickerbocker in October 1834, had like Nathaniel Willis found his way into American periodical literature by way of the prize route, and like Willis had begun his career as a poet. Probably the encouragement received from his uncle Willis Gaylord, editor of the Genesee Farmer and Albany Cultivator and after whom the young writer was named, was in part responsible for his turn toward creative writing as a profession;²⁴ but whatever the reason, a little more than a year after Willis Clark attained his majority he was awarded the \$100 offered by the Albany Literary Gazette for the best tale entered in their "literary prize contest" for 1831.²⁵

Early in 1833, after having gained experience in the

²³ "Our Last Article for 1833," II (December 1833), 492.

²⁴ Taft, Minor Knickerbockers, p. 401.

²⁵ The tale was entitled "Retribution." For this announcement see New-York Mirror, IX (January 28, 1832), 239.

varied chores of magazine management by a short stint on the Columbian Star (Philadelphia), Willis Clark was named editor of the Philadelphia Gazette by Samuel C. Atkinson, owner and publisher of Atkinson's Casket, who had just purchased his second periodical. In reporting the appointment the New-York Mirror praised Atkinson for his acumen in choosing Willis Clark, calling the young writer an "efficient, experienced and able" poet and editor.²⁶ Yet it was not until Clark joined his brother Lewis on the staff of the Knickerbocker Magazine in October 1834, that he had a chance to demonstrate his skill as a familiar essayist.

Possibly for the sake of peace in the family, Willis Clark at first professed to be as staunch an Irving man as his brother. Certainly he often dropped Irving's name and the names of Irving's works in his essays, and in making up the "Literary Notices" department of the Knickerbocker he regularly mentioned Irving as a model writer, praised his Sketch Book and Bracebridge Hall, and urged aspiring penmen to look to the work of America's first man of letters for inspiration.²⁷ Yet Willis Clark's essays do not, as Lewis Clark's do, remind one of the essays in the Sketch Book, nor does Willis Clark's style reflect the influence

²⁶ Mirror, X (May 11, 1833), 359; for further comment see XI (May 10, 1834), 359.

²⁷ Knickerbocker, IV (November 1834), 411; VI (August 1835), 129-130; VI (November 1835), 448.

of Geoffrey Crayon's. It was to the "gentle Elia" that the author of "Ollapodiana" went to school, and in so doing, became one of the small number of devoted Lambians in America in this period. For as we shall see, it was Willis Clark who composed the first eulogy of Elia to appear in American print after Lamb's death in December 1834, it was he who exclaimed that not even Irving could match the "fair charactery of life" that Lamb's essays "trace[d] . . . on foolscap and vellum," and it was he who predicted that the Essays of Elia would become a classic in the literature of the world.²⁸

Yet the history of Lamb's reception in America cannot be told by beginning with Willis Clark's elegiac essay to Elia in 1835. To understand Clark's interest, and the interest of other essayists--Henry T. Tuckerman, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Samuel Edmund Sewall, and some whose names are lost--in Elia, we must go back precisely a decade from the time that Willis Clark joined his brother on the staff of the Knickerbocker.

²⁸ Knickerbocker Magazine, V (March 1835), 235-236; V (May 1835), 435-438; VI (July 1835), 77-78.

CHAPTER VII

"MY RELATIONS":

AMERICAN FOLLOWERS OF LAMB

Setting aside the essays of Irving and some few good pieces by workhorse penmen such as Paulding, Cox, and Willis, the group of familiar essays written by American essayists between 1815 and 1835 which best deserves the title "personal essays" was the small number of pieces which remind the modern reader of the Essays of Elia. Such a conclusion is perhaps ironic, but it is also understandable. As has been shown, American essayists of the era were more often imitative than original. Aspiring guardians of social morals plumbed the pages of the Spectator and Tatler for ideas; stout defenders of things American found a bulwark in Irving, despite his absenteeism, and in the Sketch Book, despite its attention to things English. Some nature writers adapted The Excursion and the "Intimations" ode to their use, and some clung to Night Thoughts and The Seasons. But whatever their sources, American essayists labored under a double burden made even more ponderous by their generally inefficient craftsmanship: too heavy a reliance upon others' work, often complicated by unclear impressions received from that work, led them toward vacuity or

toward awkward "literaryness"; too obedient a response to contemporary currents of emphasis or bias led them toward conscious shaping or directing of essays. As a result, in the hands of less able writers the familiar essay was pressured by these influences into almost complete objectivity; even in the hands of more accomplished craftsmen it sacrificed some of its intrinsic charm by too frequent dwelling on public issues or by heeding the first of La Bruyère's admonitions--"We should neither write nor speak but to instruct"--and ignoring the second--"Yet if we happen to please, we should not be sorry for it, since by those means we render those instructive truths more palatable and acceptable."

Refreshingly different, then, are the American essays written in the last half of our period which remind the reader of Lamb's work. Few in number, and not found with any regularity in issues of periodicals before the mid-1820's, they nevertheless shine jewel-like amid the welter of consciously instructive, self-consciously "literary," and volubly chauvinistic ones with which they had to struggle for column space. For like Lamb and his great contemporary English essayists, Hazlitt, Hunt, and DeQuincey, these American essayists were striving to reproduce good talk in the written word and, more important, to make this rather than criticism of manners or defense of things American their primary aim. That they achieved

at least moderate success is notable in an age so desirous of purpose and direction in its literature.

The phrase "remind the reader of Lamb" needs a word of explanation. Perhaps in the broadest sense these American essayists are best called Lambians because their work is unified by two clearly discernible factors: its dependence upon or similarity to the Essays of Elia; its unmistakably subjective approach. Moreover, for the first time among groups of essays in this study, these writings persistently ignore the American currents of emphasis peculiar to the age that were strong enough to pervade and to some extent standardize the essays produced even by the followers of Irving. No championing of Americanism here: those who echoed Lamb's "Two Races of Men" and "Old China" in writing about "Old Books" were quite as ready to admit that Livy and Rousseau and Milton had as much charm for them as Irving and Bryant and Cooper; no point, in fact, was made about the nationality of the author in question.¹ No Anglophobia: though "Saturday Night in London" provided for its writer as many gambits for thrusts as did any of Fay's or Paulding's pieces, it ignored these openings and devoted itself to the "bustle and confusion . . . the varied groups [who] present themselves to the keen observer

¹ See, for example, the anonymous "Reflector--No. V," Masonic Mirror, I (February 19, 1825), 2.

of men and things. . . ."2 No heavy admonitions to moral living: though these essayists could say, as Lamb in "A Complaint of the Decay of Beggars" gently said, "Shut not thy purse-strings always against painted distress," they could say this and no more; they could and did avoid the poverty of statement that weighted the essays of Mordecai Noah and Mrs. Sigourney.

In short, these essayists were their own masters. A few, admittedly, leaned as heavily on the Essays of Elia as Irving's admirers did upon the Sketch Book, and these imitative "Elias" display their literary debt in the same ways: by frequent reference to Lamb's literary achievements; by insertion in "original" essays of phrases such as "as Lamb says" or of typically Lambian anecdotes or "letters"; or by actual borrowings of technique and device, style and tone, subject matter and title. Nevertheless, it should be emphasized that examples of slavish dependence are few. There was among American Lambians no such widespread and servile attachment to model as among American Addisonians, probably the primary reason being that Lamb's subjectivity resisted the kind of "filling-in-of-blanks" that many American essayists resorted to in their criticisms of customs, their exhortations to moral living, and their praise of things American. To say it

² Anonymous essay, Minerva, I n.s. (October 2, 1824), 413-414.

another way, Lamb provided no convenient party line for the potential imitator to adopt either as raison d'être for his essay or as ready-made framework needing only embellishment for completion.

Consequently, except for the few essays which baldly exhibit unmistakable dependence on Lamb, the phrase "remind the reader of Lamb" better describes the essays under discussion here. For they do remind of Lamb in things which may be pointed out in four-square fashion and in ways less tangible but nonetheless discernible.

That Lamb was not well known to American essayists before the mid-1820's is understandable. His first published writings, which appeared in the London Morning Post in the same year in which Irving contributed the first "Jonathan Oldstyle" paper to the New York Morning Chronicle, were printed in a newspaper not well known to Americans. His contributions to Leigh Hunt's Reflector and Examiner after 1810 came at a time when Americans, even their literary men, were preparing to fight the second war within a generation. Though Lamb's Works were published in London in 1818, these were not available in an American edition until 1832, and the Essays of Elia, which were known to Americans relatively soon after their appearance in English periodicals, were not chosen by Lamb for a collected edition until 1823. Moreover, Lamb's early essays--those written for the Post, the Reflector, and the Examiner--

were closer in style and tone to the eighteenth century periodical essays than to the rich and individual style of the later London Magazine contributions which Lamb began to write in 1820.³ It is hardly to be expected, therefore, that the "gentle Elia" could have had any appreciable impact upon American writings until after 1821, and even then, with Irving's literary star having risen so rapidly and brilliantly between 1819 and 1822, and with the attention of American writers and readers for the most part focused on American writings, it seems likely that any notice of Elia the essayist on this side of the Atlantic would not have been widespread. Indeed, the most recently published scholarship on Lamb in America has found no mention of him in American periodicals before 1828.⁴

Nevertheless, after Lamb had begun to contribute essays over the signature "Elia" to the London Magazine in August 1820, the likelihood of his notice by American writers must be said to have materially increased. As has been pointed out earlier in the discussion of American Addisonians, American periodical editors of this era found the London a rewarding mine for extracts and even entire articles; it seems inconceivable, then, that their regular

³ For a full discussion of this point see Edith C. Johnson, Lamb Always Elia (Boston, 1936), pp. 130-140.

⁴ Stephen A. Larrabee, "Some American Notices of Lamb in 1828," PMLA, LXXIV (March 1959), 157.

perusal of that magazine on the hunt for suitable material for reprinting would not have led them to "discover" the essays of Elia sometime soon after their first printing. Perhaps not in 1820. Lamb's first Elia essay did not appear until August, and the copies of the magazine certainly did not reach American editors until two or three months later. Moreover, the four Elia essays in the London for that year--"South Sea House" (August), "Oxford in the Vacation" (October), "Christ's Hospital Five and Thirty Years Ago" (November), "The Two Races of Men" (December)--because of their predominantly English themes might not have immediately attracted American editors. Too, Lamb's name, compared to Wordsworth's, Byron's, Scott's, and Coleridge's, among the English Romantics, was a come-lately yet to make its reputation with American readers. But 1821 was Lamb's first wonderful year--the year that saw the printing in the London of fifteen Elia essays, among them "Mrs. Battle's Opinions on Whist" (February), "A Chapter on Ears" (March), and "A Quakers' Meeting" (April); these certainly could not have been passed by unnoticed. It seems reasonable, also, that they were not, for although the earliest mention of Lamb in American magazines that has come to light in the process of this investigation is dated 1824--the earliest notice thus far recorded by scholars--the likelihood is that a complete search of all American periodicals extant between 1821 and 1824 would uncover other, albeit probably few, notices.

At this writing, James Gordon Brooks, pugnacious and mercurial junior editor of the New York Minerva, must be assigned the credit for the first critical notice of Lamb to appear in American public print.⁵ Early in 1824, Brooks had begun three separate series of essays ("columns") in the new Minerva: a group of travel essays "By an American"; a series of articles in praise of the works of Byron; and a series of "Notices of the Works of Eminent Authors," both "classic" (eighteenth century) and "modern." The first series, "Journal of a Tour in Italy, in the Year 1821. By an American," signed with Brooks's usual "J. G. B.," was as the title indicates a collection of travel sketches culled from Brooks's grand tour three years before.⁶ Not one to waste valuable material, the resourceful essayist combed from these Italian experiences all data in any way relevant to Byron's Italian days and, augmenting these with copious "selections" from the poet's verse and with paragraphs of praise for that "marvellous man," wrote perhaps the most frankly admiring pair of essays in tribute

⁵ Brooks and George Houston, senior editor of the Minerva, obviously had a falling out. The squabble is detailed in an extra sheet added to the number for April 30, 1825 (III n.s., n.p.), in which Brooks also printed his resignation from the periodical and a notice that he would soon become editor of the New York Literary Gazette and Phi Beta Kappa Repository. For further data, see III n.s. (September 3, 1825), 350.

⁶ These began in the Minerva, I n.s. (June 19, 1824), 171-173, and continued to appear weekly for six months.

to Byron to be found in American periodicals of the early 1820's.⁷ In the "Notices" column may be found the regular run of commentaries on the same authors often spoken of in periodicals of the era: Addison, Goldsmith, Dr. Johnson, and Pope; Irving, Cooper, Bryant, and Percival. On October 2, 1824, however, Brooks departed from the usual long enough to write a brief note and to retell an anecdote about Charles Lamb's ability as a punster.⁸ In retelling this anecdote, Brooks's tone implies his assumption that the readers of the Minerva were familiar with Lamb and his works; the note in no way "introduces" Lamb to readers, and thus reinforces the contention that the name of Lamb probably had been mentioned earlier in American print, although careful search of the earlier issues of the Minerva and of other periodicals used for this study has revealed no positive evidence of this.

After this notice by Brooks, however, Lamb material began to appear frequently, not only in the Minerva but also in other periodicals in Boston, Baltimore, Philadelphia, and New York. Throughout the decade which followed Brooks's notice, "Reflections in the Pillory," "Captain Jackson," "Modern Gallantry," and "A Quakers' Meeting"

⁷ Minerva, I n.s. (July 3, 1824), 205-206; (July 24, 1824), 250-252.

⁸ I n.s., 405.

were often reprinted in America.⁹ Lamb began to be mentioned in articles on English literature, especially in those which noticed "contemporary artists."¹⁰ And notices of Lamb's works and critical articles on his essays and poetry also began to appear.

The earliest lengthy critique to be found on Lamb in the period was printed in the Philadelphia Monthly Magazine in September 1828. It first gave attention to Lamb's poetry: "Are you a lover of nature and simplicity, or of art and splendour in composition? Unless you are an ardent lover of downright, pure unadulterated nature, never oppose a volume of Charles Lamb. . . . There is more purity of style and thought in these little pieces than in any other composition with which we are acquainted in the whole range of modern English literature."¹¹ Then, to the essays, although the critic, who signed himself "P. P.," received little assistance for his own flat style from the essays of his "favourite":

Of the [Essays of Elia] we have time to say but a few words. It is frequently quaint, but never affected; and there is such an everlasting fund of good nature,

⁹ See, for example, Pearl, III (December 21, 1833), 80; IV (June 6, 1835), 311. Atkinson's Casket, No. 4 (April 1834), pp. 152-153. Knickerbocker Magazine, V (March 1835), 259-260. New-York Mirror, XII (September 6, 1834), 75.

¹⁰ The Essayist, I (September 1833), 360-362.

¹¹ "The Writings of Charles Lamb," II (September 1828), 334-336.

good humour and wit in it, that it must necessarily be a favourite with whoever reads it. . . . There is an originality in [the essays] and a freshness, which is the true test of genius. Lamb is a copier of no favourite writer. He has drawn his materials from himself and his inspiration from nature, and has built a beautiful and perhaps an enduring monument (p. 336).

Other, brief, criticisms usually accompanied reprints of Lamb's essays. Samuel Atkinson called the Essays of Elia "excellent . . . full of humour and philosophy," and referred to Lamb as "that rich and tranquil writer" when he reprinted "Reflections in the Pillory."¹² The caustic Bostonian, Isaac C. Pray, Jr., found Elia's "A Quakers' Meeting" both "moving" and "moral" and his "Captain Jackson" "satisfying" enough to be selected for inclusion in the Pearl.¹³ But the New-York Mirror reprinted "Modern Gallantry" with never a word about Lamb, perhaps fearing that words of praise about an Englishman would undermine their position as leader in the "publish American writers" movement.¹⁴

In March 1823, Lamb wrote:

I have an almost feminine partiality for old china. When I go to see any great house, I enquire for the china-closet,

- ¹² Atkinson's Casket, No. 4 (April 1834), pp. 152-153.
¹³ III (December 21, 1833), 80; IV (June 6, 1835), 311.
¹⁴ XII (September 6, 1834), 75.

and next for the picture gallery. I cannot defend the order of preference, but by saying, that we have all some taste or other, of too ancient a date to admit of our remembering distinctly that it was an acquired one. I can call to mind the first play, and the first exhibition, that I was taken to; but I am not conscious of a time when china jars and saucers were introduced into my imagination.¹⁵

So began "Old China," the essay by Elia that in the next century and a quarter was to be included not only in myriad anthologies of English prose and as many collections of "great essays" but also, because of its near perfect design, in numerous texts on the art of composition. Like the ABA form in musical composition Lamb's essay is a model of prose structure, beginning with a description of the recently purchased set of old blue china, passing on to recollections of past days, and returning at the end of the essay to pictures of Chinese waiters and ladies in summerhouses that adorn the service.

How closely some American essayists of the mid-1820's read Lamb can be quickly shown. Just two years after "Old China" had appeared in the London, an anonymous essayist in the Minerva wrote: "I love old furniture. It revives a thousand agreeable associations, and reminds us of days of ease, comfort, and competence. When I see the comely chair, with its tall twisted back, so conveniently constructed to

¹⁵ The Works of Charles Lamb (Philadelphia, 1859), p. 480. Further references to Lamb's essays in this chapter will be to this first complete American edition.

give repose to the human frame. . . ."¹⁶ And another, a month earlier, in the Masonic Mirror, wrote of "Old Letters": "I know nothing more calculated to bring back the nearly faded dreams of youth--the almost obliterated scenes and passions of our boyhood--and to recall the brightest and best associations of those days--'When young blood ran riot in the veins,/And boyhood made us sanguine'."¹⁷ These are, of course, two of the small number of American essays which baldly appropriated for their own use the design, title, subject matter, device, and style of an essay by Elia. The design remained unchanged: object--subject--object. No matter that "Old China" became "Old Furniture" or "Old Letters" (or "Old Books," "Old Picutres," "Old Albums," "Old Houses"--these too occur). For device, substitute an old friend or teacher or relative for Cousin Bridget. Retell reminiscences of childhood, with the faint haze of nostalgia about them; or recall an incident in which you substitute the purchase of an expensive antimacassar for Lamb's Beaumont and Fletcher folio, or an Asher Durand print for Lamb's "Leonardo." Finally, be sure to return at the end of the essay to that "comely chair" or that "faded letter" as Lamb had returned to his "merry Chinese waiter," even though you may have eaten

¹⁶ "Old Furniture," Minerva, III n.s. (April 23, 1825), 45-46.

¹⁷ I (March 12, 1825), 4.

New Jersey blueberries instead of Elia's strawberries and Boston scrod instead of trout from the Lea as you practiced, Lamb-like, "l'art s'égérer avec méthode."

Fortunately, such unconscionable borrowings were few: no more than a dozen or two of this stripe came to light in the gathering of material for this study. Yet even in these imitations one can sense that the anonymous borrowers have been able to come closer to the style and tone of Lamb than the imitators of the Spectator did to those of Addison. Though there is something annoyingly edgy (besides, of course, the irritation felt by the reader over such an apparent theft) about the opening paragraph of "Old Letters"--perhaps it is the harsh juxtaposition of calculated and obliterated, or perhaps the tinny ring of "faded dreams of youth" and "brightest and best associations"--it is still a good approximation of the Elia air; though there is over-richness of style in "Old Furniture"--so much alliteration so soon--it is an equally good one. Most important, too, is the similarity of approach to that of Lamb's: the relation of experiences from the essayist's daily life and of ideas and opinions expressive of peculiarities of temperament, tastes, and prejudices. For like the Essays of Elia the essays of American Lambians are for the most part concerned with the stuff of autobiography.

One phase of the subject--a remembrance of things past, tinged with a hazy and somewhat sentimental nostalgia--

is evidenced by such essays as "Scenes of My Youth," printed in the American Athenaeum¹⁸ less than a year after Lamb's "Blakesmoor in H--shire" appeared in the London for September 1824. Though unlike Lamb's essay in all surface details, the American one captures the sentiment without sentimentalism that glows warmly from Elia's account when "the remains of an old great house" remind him that the "solitude of childhood is not so much the mother of thought, as it is the feeder of love, and silence, and admiration."¹⁹ In similar fashion the anonymous "Olden Times" and "Early Reminiscences" wander nostalgically through autobiographical reveries without succumbing to oversentimental dramatization.²⁰ The point is that whether or not these American essayists' memories were real or fictional (Lamb's of course were real), they escape the artificiality of the "reminiscence" used as device in the Addisonian essay to hammer home a moral lesson. Neither is the reverie here calculated to provide a framework for criticism of advancing technology as in some of the nature essayists' work, nor is it recounted in the purple language of the "literary." Though it would be idle to suggest that any of these American essays just cited approach Lamb's in epicurean choice

¹⁸ I (June 9, 1825), 62.

¹⁹ Works, p. 426.

²⁰ Masonic Mirror, I (July 9, 1825), 4; Boston Literary Magazine, I (June 1832), 62-66.

of word and phrase, they nonetheless have a ring of simplicity and genuineness rare in this era of gaudy pretentiousness.

Paradoxically enough, the few times that American Lambians did descend to the purple seem always to have been in those passages they wrote in praise of Elia. The anonymous author of "Association," for example, writes in this vein early in his essay:

I know not how it may be with the rest of the world; in fact, I do not care very much; but I have very distinct and palpable associations with certain authors. Association is so remarkable, that I cannot divest myself from strong prejudice against excellent writers, merely from the cut of their coats. One of the Elizabethan age, puzzles me extremely with his tight breeches and magnificent yellow bows, his timepiece formality and injudicious powder, until I resolve, in an antiquarian spirit, it would be an agreeable thing to know nothing of antique, unnecessary fashion.²¹

Then, after the essayist is visited in his poor garret by the author of Paradise Lost, "in garb reverend and sombre," and after a succession of brief whimsicalities about Shakespeare, Jonson, Pope, Coleridge, and Wordsworth--"all made real by association"--the writer turns to Lamb:

Who does not love Charles Lamb, with his strange wit, and unequivocal good-nature? Who does not feel, as he glides over the pleasant passages and quaint avenues--where the hedge is still cut in antiquated

²¹ New-England Magazine, IX (July 1835), 50.

style, of Elia--that he is journeying with a most excellent fellow-passenger? His heart is fairly before the reader, with all its tenderness; his overflowing heart is in his pages, unbounded. I must confess, I have few friends, of flesh and blood, that I love as this same Charles Lamb (p. 51).

Even known essayists who regularly wrote good English and rarely succumbed to the effusive outpouring, could not avoid flatulence when praising Elia. The adept Willis Gaylord Clark, author of the best series of familiar essays in the early years of the Knickerbocker Magazine, was one of Lamb's constant admirers who captured the Elia air as perfectly as any American essayist of the era:

By the way, while discoursing of advertisements, I think I may say that they form one of the strong characteristics of our enterprising people. Look into the newspapers,--how they teem with these tidings of life! I love to look them over. What a vast amount of interests they represent,--how many hopes and fears! From "Tin plates and spelter," to "A Wife Wanted," they are pleasing to read: and I am glad, when I see an avis that I have watched for some time daily, at last disappear. It is a sign that the author has had his wish accomplished,--has sold his commodities, or found what he sought.

There is just about the same difference between the orthography and grace of city and country advertisements, that there is between the manners of town and country people. Many of the rural merchants expose their wares in poetry; they sell muslins or groceries, by long metre, and chant the praises of wooden bowls and codfish, on the murmuring lyre. Methinks it should go hard with customers, if such harmonious notifications do not usually take good effect for their authors. Legal advertisements, by humble functionaries, have not

this privilege. They must be confined to the prose--though not to the letter--of law;--for imagination sometimes gambols through them, in a most wanton quest of new combinations of letters.²²

No purple here; on the contrary, a mellifluous, imaginative style. Yet Clark could not restrain himself while writing of Lamb, who "walked with the god-like spirits of old English literature, like a compeer among his fellows,--he sat him down beneath the royal and purple shadows of their mighty-mantles, and ate of the manna which descended around. . . ."

Despite these lapses, American Lambians display more artistic affinities for the Elia essay. For the first time in the era there is in these essays a judicious, even sparing, use of the direct quotation. Addisonian imitators and, in fact, unoriginal American essayists of all breeds, clung doggedly to the printed wisdom of the masters--as recorded in Lemprière, probably, or in one of the many "beauties" volumes which could repose relatively inexpensively and very conveniently on any desk. Irving, of course, had only on occasion descended to the practice of literary larding. But the Americans who in following Irving fit Lowell's description of Thoreau in A Fable for Critics far better than Thoreau did, could not resist the urge to "better" their essays with words from Pope and

²² "Ollapodiana," Knickerbocker Magazine, V (March 1835), 239.

Dr. Johnson, Shakespeare and Milton. Perhaps more than Irving, Lamb was sparing with the direct quote; certainly he less often carried illustration to excess. And it is notable that the American essayists whose work was close to Lamb's reflect the same care in their selection and use of the direct quote.

None of them, of course, possessed the rich background of reading that surged to the surface in the essays of Elia. Among American essayists of the era only Irving can be said to have been Lamb's equal in this respect, although R. H. Dana, Sr., Bryant, Knapp, Verplanck, and Holmes were not far behind. Holmes's first two "Autocrat" papers, for example, are rich in allusions and sparing in direct quotations. Echoes of Greek and Roman myths, the Bible, Wordsworth, Mme. de Staël, Washington Allston, Casaubon, Dr. Johnson, Shelley (reasonably rare in America in this era), Cowper, and Shakespeare resound from these two essays; mentions also: like Lamb in "The Two Races of Men," Holmes illustrates his ideas by brief reference to the words of or anecdotes about authors he is familiar with.²³ But neither Lamb nor his American counterparts fell to larding, and such quoted materials and echoes as do appear in their essays appear as the result of their love of the printed word, their wide reading, and so thorough an assimilation of what

²³ "The Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table," New-England Magazine, I (November 1831), 428-431; II (February 1832), 134-138.

they read that the thread of allusiveness wove naturally into their style.

Lamb's relations of recent experiences which either exceptionally pleased or unusually annoyed him found favor with Americans. Elia's mock-furious harangue on the "measured malice of music" in "A Chapter on Ears" was wittily and self-revealingly matched by an unknown American in "Tea and Music" when he protested that "the music I have undergone during the Merry Christmas time, within doors and out doors, is enough to excite commiseration. . . . Peace to their clarinets, to their whooping horns, to their grating violoncellos, and to their wretched anti-Logierian harmonies and accompaniments."²⁴ Holmes's "Old Books" reveals as loving an attention to "those wall-flowers of the drawing-room" and as stern a reproach for the desecrator whose touch results in books "despoiled of their covers and rent by ruthless hands" as Lamb's "Detached Thoughts on Books and Reading."²⁵ The prolific author of the "Reflector" series of essays in the Masonic Mirror had as mixed a bag of epithets, good and bad, about borrowers of books as Lamb did in "The Two Races of Men."²⁶ And Lamb's gustatory ecstasies in the famous "Roast Pig" and the later "Thoughts on Presents of Game" found American expression in numbers

²⁴ The Albion, VII (May 9, 1829), 384.

²⁵ New-England Magazine, II (January 1832), 46-49.

²⁶ I (February 19, 1825), 2.

of essays, perhaps the most entertaining of which were "The Roast Turkey" and "Dinner Adventures," both in the New York Constellation, and "Hints to Gourmands" and "Green Peas and Other Matters," in Boston periodicals.²⁷

The last-named of these gustatory essays contains hints of the Elia humor too, especially in this case of the "affected manner" Lamb assumed when wryly sketching the characters in "Poor Relations." The author of "Green Peas" had had his slumbers disturbed by an unwelcome intruder, a "formidable mosquito [which] would sing me into a doze by his provoking and somniferous buzz, sting me to a most violent animation by the gentle use of his slight and lithe proboscis, and then fly from the scene of his perforations, just in season to escape from the wrath of my descending fingers. I could then almost hear him chuckling over the success of his adventure. . . ."28 Yet it was Lamb's savoring of the pun and the jest that occasioned the longest and most thorough critical essay on him in our period, the unsigned "Elia" in the New-England Magazine for October 1835.

The unknown author was clearly a Lamb partisan. For him, Elia was a composite of Addison, Sterne, Goldsmith,

²⁷ Constellation, II (May 7, 1831), 193; II (February 19, 1831), III. Boston Courier, April 14, 1828; New-England Magazine, III (September 1832), 228-230.

²⁸ New-England Magazine, III (September 1832), 228-229.

Irving, Donne, Cowley, Shakespeare, and Bulwer; an "admirable humourist . . . airy without frivolities; queer and capricious without impertinence; sentimental without sentimentality; fanciful, witty and wise." Despite the echoes of authors listed above, he was a "very original" essayist who could "refine and over-refine an odd idea, till one fairly laughs out in admiration of its impalpable, transparent, glittering, fluttering exility! [sic] He delights to seethe a conceit in humour, till it rises volatilized, and vanishes, with all its Iris colors, in the air." Yet the writer does not "wonder that [Lamb] has not been much read in our country. . . . The million are incapable of him." However, in commenting that "Charles Lamb's . . . works are announced as in press by George Dearborn, of New-York," he exults, "How rich a treat is in store for us!" and chooses selections from "The Two Races of Men," "Captain Jackson," "Old Benchers of the Inner Temple," "All Fools' Day," and "On the Acting of Munden" to agree with Willis Clark that Elia "ought to become a classic"; but the New Englander cannot help adding, "that is, among all gentlefolk. . . ."29

Nor can the Elia devotee and his article without calling attention to Lamb's "intoxicating magnificence . . . [and] exquisiteness of touch and expation [sic], hardly equalled, we think, (certainly never surpassed) by

29 New-England Magazine, IX (October 1835), 233-239.

Knickerbocker or Yorick" in drawing a character sketch. Lamb, like Irving, was fond of the character, and followers of both essayists were equally so. Though perhaps more often than Irving Lamb enjoyed sketching portraits of his friends and members of his family, the mere fact of numbers provides no striking difference between the two men in this respect. Nor is there a significant difference among their respective followers; in fact, even though Lamb in essays before 1820 and Irving in the "Oldstyle" letters and Salmagundi had both drawn type characters, American Elias and Geoffrey Crayons joined their masters in later essays in moving the character closer in form and spirit to that found in the nineteenth century novel than to that of the eighteenth century periodical essay.

If there are any points of difference between Lamb and Irving in their character portrayals they are, first, that Irving had a tendency to oversentimentalize about his women--as in the "Widow and Her Son" and "The Pride of the Village"--and, second, that perhaps as a result of the sentimentality but certainly closely linked to it, Irving wrote at greater length about each character that caught his eye. Broadly speaking, too, these qualities descend to American writers in debt to Irving. Longfellow's "Jacqueline," the over-brave tear-starter from the first (one-volume) Outre-Mer, owes much to Irving's picture of the doomed girl in "The Pride of the Village," although in this paragraph the Bowdoin professor sounds more like Mrs.

Sigourney than like Irving:

The long twilight of the summer evening stole on; the shadows deepened without, and the night-lamp glimmered feebly in the sick chamber; but still she slept. She was lying with her hands clasped upon her breast,--her pallid cheek resting upon the pillow, and her bloodless lips apart, but motionless and silent as the sleep of death. Not a breath interrupted the silence of her slumber. Not a movement of the heavy and sunken eye-lid--not a trembling of the lip--not a shadow on the marble brow told when the spirit took its flight. It passed to a better world than this.

"There's a perpetual spring--perpetual youth; No joint-benumbing cold, nor scorching heat, Famine, nor age have any being there."³⁰

On the other hand, Oliver Wendell Holmes's "shabby gentleman" and his coachman are less reminiscent of Irving's characters than of Lamb's, despite their "type" qualities and their similarity to two of Irving's creations. Listen to the "Autocrat" on the first of the pair:

Spring, as I said before, is a sad time for a shabby gentleman. In winter, booted, buttoned, and tippeted, the secrets of his bosom are hid from the eyes of the curious. But if his finances can circumvent a cloak--O there is no telling how respectable, how imposing, how august he may render his appearance. Happy, happy autumnal pauper! At the first breath, which sickens the faint cheek of the most languishing exotic, he wraps himself in the mantle which covers all deficiencies, and suns himself in the smile of public toleration. When the last icicle is melting from the tresses of May,

³⁰ Atkinson's Casket, No. 11 (November 1833), p. 503.

he resigns it once more to the solitude
of his wardrobe.³¹

Like Lamb, too, Holmes had the knack of providing a satisfying picture of a man in only a sentence or two. After remarking that "every sophomore describes stage-coach companions,--and I am not a sophomore"--a witticism that one dares make no unsubstantiated inferences from--Holmes wrote:

"Take care of your cloak, sir;" said the grisly driver--"things is brittle till the frost's out on 'em."

[Drivers are often acutely vulgar, and intensely impudent; but perhaps there is as much solid brawn, and as much downright sense among that fraternity, as might be found in an equal number of representatives. The driver is a kind of dry land sailor, pulling at leather thongs instead of hempen cordage; and finally, this parenthesis is a clear matter of gratuity.]³²

This sketch of Holmes's has much in common with Lamb's brief reference to Dr. Johnson: "The author of the Rambler used to make inarticulate animal noises over a favourite food. Was this the music quite proper to be preceded by the grace? or would the pious man have done better to postpone his devotions to a season when the blessing might be contemplated with less perturbation?"³³

Yet of more importance than any of these similarities

³¹ "Spring," New-England Magazine, II (April 1832), 330.

³² "Spring," p. 331. The brackets are Holmes's.

³³ "Grace before Meat," Works, p. 389.

of structure, device, and subject matter is the influence of Lamb's style and tone on his American admirers, for in their perceiving and assimilation of these two qualities this group of American essayists achieved a striking measure of success. As we have seen, American Addisonians, though they sometimes succeeded in their imitation of the Spectator's mechanics, stumbled badly in their attempts to match its prose art. Those who modeled their essays on the Sketch Book, though they were notably better craftsmen than their Addisonian counterparts, possessed of truer ears and more alert responses, too often forced their writing into patterns demanded by the age, and thereby sacrificed both originality and charm for the sake of acceptance. But the American essayists who joined Tom Moore in proclaiming Lamb the "hero of the London" forgot to stomp for a native American literature whenever they wrote of books and reading, assumed that their readers had acumen enough to draw morals from literature without having them hammered home at the end of each paragraph, and agreed with Lamb that an economic but epicurean choice of words produced images worth more than hundreds of image-less sentences.

Not all American familiar essayists whose work reminds the reader of Lamb's learned their lessons perfectly, of course. On one occasion that grim critic of the English Romantic poets, John Greenleaf Whittier, turned his pen delightfully in the direction of "A Chapter on Ears":

Sing on, then, Betty, sweet night-
ingale of the kitchen! From my heart I
wish that every vagabond Italian torturer
of cat-gut--every strolling musical men-
dicant, from Paganini downward, was con-
demned to listen to thee for the next
half-century.

Mad--yes, I am mad--music-mad--
quaver-stricken! What unlucky planet drove
me to seek relief from Betty's barcarole,
from bitter thoughts, and physical suffer-
ing, to the side of that indefatigable
Miss M--, that semibreve in petticoats,--
that locomotive ledger-line,--that appog-
giatura personified?³⁴

But just as often, if not more often, Whittier emphasized
the instructive nature of literature even in those essays
of his obviously meant to be "familiar."³⁵

A truly Lambian essay was authored by Samuel E. Sewall
under the title, "An Essay on Garrets."³⁶ In the skylarking
tone sometimes used by Lamb, Sewall calls Dr. Franklin
"our immortal skinflint . . . [who] declares that a fat
kitchen makes a lean will"; remarks that "Drydens, Steeles,
and Savages have passed half their lives in garrets--not
that they were hackneyed, Grub-street inditers of verses;
but they were forced to bury themselves here to escape the
clutches of catch-poles, duns, and bumbaliffs, 'To hide
them from the garish eye of day'"; and avers that the

³⁴ "The Nervous Man. Number II," New-England Magazine, V
(November 1833), 374.

³⁵ See "New England Superstitions," New-England Magazine,
V (July 1833), 26-31, especially p. 31.

³⁶ This essay is signed with Sewall's regular periodical
signature, "S. Z."

"Romans showed their judgement, in my opinion, by taking their meals in the airy cockloft. They showed their wisdom by excluding from its precincts, mice, poets, and their muscicular abortions."³⁷ And another of his entitled "A Short Chapter on Long Ears" included the

amusing story of a witty knave, who went to an old woman, in London, and bargained for as much lace as would reach from ear to ear. When the price was settled, he told her he believed she had not quite enough in her shop, for one of his ears was nailed to the pillory in Bristol. Many an Englishman went to his grave, in the sixteenth century, with but one ear, leaving the other nailed to the pillory to look after his reputation. Then was the glory of ears in England, when they had the honor of giving a name to millions, and became more prominent by the black velvet skull-caps that gave them the name of prick-eared puritans.³⁸

But an unknown essayist's "Chapter on Cats" tried and failed. In its attempt to match the wit of Lamb's prose it only succeeded in demonstrating that it was so attempting: "Shall I rend away the veil, as your crack novelist would say, and harrow up my recollections, until my heart swells and my head aches with the melancholy retrospection? Perish the idea! No--No. . . ."³⁹ And Mathew Carey caught the tone of Lamb's prose but not its vigor: "I love to

³⁷ New-England Magazine, IV (May 1833), 399-406.

³⁸ New-England Magazine, VI (April 1834), 315.

³⁹ Knickerbocker Magazine, III (May 1834), 348.

contemplate an old clock--one of those relics of by-gone times, that come down to us wrapt in veneration--telling their tale of simple yet touching interest. How erect and prim it stands in yon corner, like some faded specimen of maiden antiquity! Its face bears evident marks of beauty--of beauty decayed, but not obliterated."⁴⁰

But the failures are few in number. By and large, American Lambians succeeded in their purpose of putting good talk on paper and of revealing in this talk their humors, tastes, prejudices, daily experiences--in short, themselves. And their subject matter complemented their purpose: despite an apparent wide range of titles--from arts to animals, from zealousness to zithers--the essays are composed of the stuff of autobiography. Not that this was new and different among American essayists of the era; the Irving circle and Irving himself had written and were writing hundreds of autobiographical or semi-autobiographical essays which were equally good talk and equally self-revealing prose. Yet in the essays by American Elias there was less objective description; a mere mention of an old coat, with perhaps only a single sentence added about its color and weave, sent the essayist into the past for warmly human recollections of his uncle's home in Uxbridge where that cloth relic hung on its designated foyer hook,

⁴⁰ "Excerpta from the Common Place Book of a Septuagenarian," Knickerbocker Magazine, IV (August 1834), 142.

and of his boyhood experiences in Massachusetts or Pennsylvania. A view of the Alleghenies evoked no moral lessons from these essayists as it did from Addisonians and no attacks on the demon science as from some nature writers. Humanly wise observation and genuine thought, yes: Lamb's serious thought in "Witches and Other Night Fears" about dreams and their significance had American parallels in the anonymous "Premonitory Dreams" and in "Retrospections," both of which speculated about the effects of crises in human life, whether dreamed or imagined.⁴¹ Lamb's eulogy to antiquity in "Oxford in the Vacation," one of the earliest essays signed "Elia" in which Lamb marks one kinship with the Romantic Movement by his interest in the past, was echoed by an essayist in Boston more than a decade later when he exclaimed: "I for one would that we could 'Pursue and overtake the wheels of time,' and roll them back twenty centuries. We should have men of nobler port and more original intellect."⁴² Though Timothy Flint argued that the present era was second in importance only to the era of the invention of printing, Willis Gaylord Clark replied that the past holds untold treasures for man, especially for the writer. Lamb, added Clark, "cannot be dissociated" from the past; "it was a

⁴¹ Atlas, II (November 21, 1829), 74; New-England Magazine, IV (January 1833), 63-64.

⁴² "Past and Present," New-England Magazine, VI (March 1834), 235.

realm in which he lived." And Clark sought often the company of his idol in the identical realm.⁴³

Lamb's approach to the business of essay-writing was also clearly perceived by his American followers. One may surmise that they had read "Distant Correspondents" in the London for March 1822, and had followed Lamb's lead in "insensibly chatting to you as familiarly as when we used to exchange good-morrows out of our old contiguous windows." Certainly Henry T. Tuckerman had read this, for in an essay entitled "Letter Writing" he proclaimed:

I have ever been a lover of epistolary composition,--for, of all vehicles of thought, I think a letter the most apt and beautiful, combining in itself all the advantages of the more artificial modes of writing with most of those which belong to verbal intercourse. . . . Perhaps the best definition of the word letter is that which describes it as written conversation. We trace upon paper what we should say were our friend at hand. . . .⁴⁴

And though Tuckerman's essays generally, and his Italian Sketch Book (1835) specifically, remind us more of Irving than of Lamb, it is clear that Tuckerman, in company with

⁴³ Flint: "The Past--The Present--and the Future," Knickerbocker Magazine, IV (September 1834), 165-175; Clark: "Ollapodiana. Number Two," Knickerbocker Magazine, V (May 1835), 434-444.

⁴⁴ The Essayist, I (September 1833), 363-365. This essay was reprinted by the Pearl, IV (May 16, 1835), 289-290. Tuckerman's signature, "Thoughtville," hitherto unknown to modern scholars, is authenticated by an editorial note in the Pearl, IV (June 20, 1835), 331.

the American followers of Elia, understood and made use of the personal approach and intimate tone practiced by the leading essayist of the London.

In May 1825, a relieved and joyous Lamb contributed "The Superannuated Man" to the London Magazine. Within this essay he included a memorable paragraph on Time, in part occasioned by the relief he felt at having been granted a pension by the East India Company, which permitted him to retire from the business world. Certainly his easement is reflected in the final paragraph of that essay, in which he calls himself "Retired Leisure." But Lamb could not have known that the penultimate sentence of that paragraph--"I have done all that I came into this world to do"--was both prophetic and ironic: prophetic in that the year of Lamb's retirement from business also witnessed his last essay for the London and became, as well, his last wonderful year; ironic in that as Lamb's strength and vigor began to ebb, physically as well as artistically, and as Henry Colburn, editor of the New Monthly Magazine to which Elia had begun to contribute pieces, showed evident dissatisfaction with the essays Lamb had sent in, in American periodicals the "gentle Elia" had just begun his upward climb--a climb which was to attract to his standard a small but articulate group of American essayists who made no secret of their devotion. How heartfelt their grief was, when early in 1835 the news reached America of Lamb's

death two days after Christmas 1834, is best observed in the words of Willis Gaylord Clark:

CHARLES LAMB is dead! Yes, the mild, the gentle Lamb, is gathered at last, pure as the innocent, simple object that syllables his name, into the fold of God! Perfect Creator of rich conceits,--charming Architect of Periods, whose delicate aroma, like balm from Gilead, yet loiters around me!--'how shall I mourn thee?' Reader, I hope you knew him, in that fond acquaintance, which Authorship establishes between a writer and his admirers. What an Essayist was he! How shrewd in observation,--how discriminative of the burlesque,--how quaint, yet melodious in diction,--in expression, how varied! Who ever rose from his pages, without brighter thoughts and softer feelings? If any one, let him distrust his heart, and acquire new perceptions,--for in my sense, 'tis better he should have no perceptions, than be in the possession of qualities that cannot enable him to discern the merits of Lamb,--the contemplative graduate of 'Christ's,' at Oxford, who could fling the lustre of his serene and goodly mind over object; who trailed the flowery vines of Poetry along the formal walks of Prose, until the scene brightened like a garden to the vision, and the air was redolent of celestial odors? When will his place be filled again? What hand may renew the leaves of 'Elia,'--fresher and greener than those of Spring? What dainty finger will trace that fair character of life, on foolscap or vellum more? Alas, dear reader, I fear me, none. How fine a scholar, too, was he! None of your plodding quoters of Greek and Latin, with sentences longer than the longest Alexandrian, and a style rougher than the wave by Charybdis,--but clear as the sky of May,--and smooth as the susurrations of a stream in Eden.
O gentle Lamb!⁴⁵

⁴⁵ "Ollapodiana," Knickerbocker Magazine, V (March 1835), 235. It is worth noting that that staunch Irving stronghold, the New-York Mirror, alone among New York City periodicals failed to notice the death of Elia by reprint, by obituary, or by news clip.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION

In 1836, Henry T. Tuckerman proclaimed in an article on the "Characteristics of Lamb": "We confess a partiality for the essay. In the literature of our vernacular tongue, it shines conspicuous, and is environed with the most pleasing associations."¹ As has been shown, there were reasons enough for Tuckerman's assertion. Not the least of these was the sheer number of essays which saw print each month in the periodicals of the era alone. Signed and unsigned, well and poorly written, on every imaginable subject, essays poured from the pens of American writers, amateurs and professionals, as they strove to provide a material answer to the question, "Where is our national literature?" And in a kind of circular action the numbers grew with each succeeding year of the period. Essayists clamored for more column space to accommodate their work, and were not shy about founding their own journals, short-lived as most of such outlets proved to be, in order that what they wrote could be set in type. In answer to the cry for culture, enterprising editors and those who aspired to be editors established more than 200 local and

¹ American Quarterly Review, XIX (March 1836), 188.

national periodicals, and these in turn adjured American essayists to follow the lead of Irving and Cooper in replying artistically to Sydney Smith's "saucy question."

Since the majority of American familiar essayists (and poets and tale writers and novelists) of the era were occasional writers, dilettantes and part-timers, and were at best only meagerly equipped to meet a literary challenge of such stature, for help they turned of their own accord and in response to editors' admonitions, first, to the classic models, the Spectator and Tatler, and to their eighteenth century English followers. After the tumultuous reception accorded the Sketch Book on both sides of the Atlantic, American essayists became as eagerly acquisitive of its form and style, its devices and tone, as they had been of the Spectator's, although the Addisonian Tories clung obstinately to their lopsidedly puritanical interpretation of edification before amusement and ignored Geoffrey Crayon's genial invitation to don holiday attire. Others bought Lyrical Ballads and The Excursion to share desk space with their Classical Dictionary and The British Essayists; still others sought with Bryant and Verplanck the melancholy company of Gray and Young and Thompson. And a few found their amalgam of skylarking wit and serious thought, sentimental nostalgia and warm humanity, in the perfect prose of Charles Lamb.

As powerful as the influences of their literary masters on the work of the American familiar essayists were

the forces which composed the mainstream of the age. The cry was not just for an American literature but for an American literature written by Americans on American subjects. So strong was the feeling that even Irving, the literary hero of the age, was attacked for his prolonged residence abroad and for his use of foreign subjects. Equally potent was the age's current of morality, which manifested itself in the printed word as purposefully as from the pulpit. A general distrust of literature meant merely for amusement found its most vocal expression in harangues against novels, although the two-hundred-year-old tradition that provided the argument for such harangues readily lent itself to assaults on questionable literature of all kinds. Equally suspect were technological advances, scored by nature essayists on moral grounds: the machine prevented man from living the kind of natural existence best for him; on natural grounds: technology was the enemy of nature; and on theological grounds: scientific advances encouraged a mundane explanation of the mysteries of existence.

Other currents of emphasis are reflected too. After Ghent, the westward movement, which had had its beginnings long before the nineteenth century dawned, acquired momentum enough to carry dozens of essay-writing amanuenses with it, some of whom spoke in favor of the tides of immigration which accompanied it and some who deplored the invasion of America by hordes of foreign exiles. A caustic Anglophobia, engendered by the political events of a half-century and

kept virulent by such disparaging remarks as Sydney Smith's, Thomas Hamilton's, and Frances Trollope's, found expression in satirical essays made equally acidulous by Americans' defensive position in virtually all areas of "culture."

This defensiveness, too, led to unreasonably strong indictments of plagiarism--plagiarism which indeed had some basis in fact as editors and essayists baldly appropriated what was not theirs or on occasion actually signed their names (or initials or pseudonyms) to whole poems or short pieces filched from "forgotten" volumes--but also plagiarism raised to the point of inanity as gimlet-eyed owners of anthologies combed each month's periodical columns for a line or a phrase that might dimly echo one from The Tempest or Paradise Lost. (It is worth mention that no such accusations were made in print against those who "borrowed" from the Spectator, although criticisms of the Spectator itself were not uncommon.)

Yet the period was a productive one for the essay. None can forget that America's first outstanding familiar essayist, in the eyes of some her greatest familiar essayist, wrote his finest work within these years. Nor that Irving's influence, widespread and pervasive in his own day, was to reach forward in time to every American familiar essayist of note in the century. Within these years, too, the great essayists of the "Golden Age" of American literature were born, and some--Holmes, Emerson, Poe--had begun to write.

It was the age in which American periodical literature came to full flower as burgeoning periodicals offered opportunity for the artists as well as for the amateurs to learn their craft through practice. If we are today inclined to sneer at the overwritten prose, the pretentious engravings, the sentimental stories, and the consumptive poetry so endlessly in evidence in the era, we need reminding that Hawthorne shared anonymity in the Token with Theodore Sedgwick Fay and Lydia Sigourney; that Holmes as gratefully accepted his pittance from the New-England Magazine as did the sentimental "Cornelia"; that Bryant and Halleck jostled Mordecai Noah and James Nack for space in the New-York Mirror; and that despite their dislike of each other, Poe and the critics of the North American Review were as merciless in their attacks on trash and as constructively critical in their estimates of literary art as many a modern scholar.

There were good essays written in the era. Even exempting Irving's, good from the beginning, a modern anthologist could choose from several dozen essays by Willis, Paulding, Holmes, Willis Clark, William Cox, and even some by Fay, to compile a respectable collection. For as the familiar essay of the era gradually shook off the hampering Spectator tradition of objective social criticism and moved in the direction of Irving's and

Lamb's subjectivity, literary art, and familiar tone of good talk put on paper, it emerged in the closing years of the period as a belletristic genre which was to be admired and practiced throughout the remainder of the century by literary artists from Thoreau to Henry James.

As for the rest of the essays of the era, their value today lies in areas tangential to literary history. Despite their inflated language, barrenness of thought, and unoriginality, as a group they provide a wealth of primary source material for the cultural historian who will write the decade study of the 1820's to precede Robert Riegel's Young America 1830-1840, Meade Minnigerode's The Fabulous Forties 1840-1850, F. L. Pattee's The Feminine Fifties, and Carl Bode's The Anatomy of American Popular Culture, 1840-1861. For other studies too: a new social, economic, or political history of the era could reap rich harvest from the lightly scanned periodical essays, formal and familiar, for despite Frank Mott's invaluable History of American Magazines, the more intensive studies of smaller areas cited in the introduction to this study, and in fact, this study itself, much yet remains to be done in the field of the early nineteenth century American familiar essay.

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VOL. IX.

NEW-YORK, SATURDAY, JULY 9, 1854.

No. 11.

We give the following certificate as we received it, and feel ourselves indebted to the writer for his ingenious and amusing fancy.

THE MIRROR.

GENTLEMEN:—In reply to your note, reminding me of my promise to contribute for your journal, I have prepared the enclosed, which, as you will perceive, is intended for the opening of your new volume. I need not here assume you of this interest, with which I have regarded the Mirror, and the pleasure I have experienced in its pages. I will endeavor, for the future, to be a more regular correspondent. Make whatever alterations you think necessary. With best wishes, I remain your sincerely,

THE MIRROR.

ADAMANTINE MEDLEY, IN ONE ACT.

Dramatis personæ.

ARCADE, patron of all the fine arts.

CLAUDE, the most pretentious of our historians.

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APPENDIX B

A

SELECTED GROUP OF ESSAYS FROM MAGAZINES, NEWSPAPERS, GIFT BOOKS, ANNUALS, AND COLLECTIONS OF THE ERA 1815-1835

- Anon. "Bell Ringing," Minerva, II n.s. (March 19, 1825),
381-382.
1831. "Cashmere Shawls," Constellation, II (October 8,
1831), 374.
1831. "Dyspepsia," Charleston Courier, March 14, 1828.
1831. "Fashionable Hieroglyphics," Philadelphia Monthly
Magazine, I (January 1828), 155-157.
1826. "Imagination," Literary Casket, I (March 18,
1826), 17.
1827. "Laughing," Philadelphia Monthly Magazine, I
(December 1827), 138-139.
- December 16, 1824. "A Lover of Good Beds," Boston Telegraph,
December 16, 1824.
- II (May 14, 1831), 204. "Meditations on a Pinch of Snuff," Constellation,
1828), 212.
1828. "Men and Candles," The Albion, VII (July 19,
1828), 212.
131. "Mustachios," The Atlas, II (January 9, 1830),
131.
1831. "My Great Grandmother's Harpsichord,"
Constellation, II (January 8, 1831), 58.
1834. "My Whiskers," New-England Magazine, VI (April
1834), 316-318.
1827. "Novelties," Philadelphia Monthly Magazine, I
(October 1827), 46-48.
1819. "On Time," Virginia Evangelical and Literary
Magazine, II (February 1819), 77-80.
1829. "On Wit," The Albion, VII (February 7, 1829), 275.
1834. "Small Matters," Western Monthly Magazine, II
(April 1834), 209-211.
- 365-366. "Sternutation," Minerva, II n.s. (March 12, 1825),
365-366.
1815. "Street Conversation," Analectic Magazine, V
(April 1815), 343-344.
1831. "Streets and Side-Walks," Constellation, II
(February 5, 1831), 89.
1835. "Tobacco," American Magazine, I (July 1835), 496.

- Anon. "What Are We?" Pearl, IV (August 1, 1835), 380.
 _____. "The World," Columbian Observer, I (May 18, 1822), 51-52.
- Audubon, John James. "A Flood of the Mississippi," New-York Mirror, X (February 9, 1833), 253-254.
- _____. "Kentucky Sports," Atkinson's Casket, No. 10 (October 1833), p. 444.
- Barker, James Nelson. "Secret Sympathies," Knickerbocker Magazine, VI (December 1835), 485-488 [misnumbered 481-484].
- Child, Lydia Maria. "The Adventures of a Raindrop," The Token, 1828 (Boston, 1827), pp. 78-83.
- _____. "Spring," The Coronal (Boston, 1832), pp. 120-122.
- _____. "Thoughts," The Coronal (Boston, 1832), pp. 63-66.
- Clark, Willis Gaylord. "Ollapodiana," [eight essays], Knickerbocker Magazine, V (March 1835), 235-240; V (May 1835), 434-444; V (June 1835), 535-539; VI (August 1835), 122-130; VI (September 1835), 234-242; VI (October 1835), 360-365; VI (November 1835), 438-450.
- Cox, William. "Albums," Crayon Sketches (New York, 1833), I, 228-236.
- _____. "Evils of Early Rising," Crayon Sketches (New York, 1833), II, 51-60.
- _____. "Old Songs," Crayon Sketches (New York, 1833), I, 200-213.
- _____. "Oysters," Crayon Sketches (New York, 1833), I, 161-168.
- _____. "Steam," Crayon Sketches (New York, 1833), I, 106-117.
- Dana, Richard Henry, Sr. "Children," Pearl, III (August 17, 1833), 7.
- _____. "A Letter from Town," Poems and Prose Writings (Philadelphia, 1833), pp. 390-401.
- _____. "Musings," Poems and Prose Writings (Philadelphia, 1833), pp. 402-410.
- Fay, Theodore Sedgwick. "Eating," Dreams and Reveries of a Quiet Man (New York, 1832), I, 74-79.
- _____. "Faces," Knickerbocker Magazine, I (February 1833), 115-118.
- _____. "Great Coats and Hats," Dreams and Reveries of a Quiet Man (New York, 1832), I, 155-158.
- _____. "Newspapers," Dreams and Reveries of a Quiet Man (New York, 1832), II, 20-23.
- _____. "Snorers," Atlantic Club-Book (New York, 1834), I, 68-74.
- Hale, Sarah Josepha. "Friendship," The Ladies' Magazine, II (July 1829), 327-328.
- Hawthorne, Nathaniel. "My Visit to Niagara," New-England Magazine, VIII (February 1835), 91-96.

- Holbrook, Silas P. "The Schoolmaster," The Legendary (Boston, 1828), II, 133-141.
- Holmes, Oliver Wendell. "The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table," [two essays], New-England Magazine, I (November 1831), 428-431; II (February 1832), 134-138.
- _____. "The Debut," New-England Magazine, II (March 1832), 225-229.
- _____. "May and October," New-England Magazine, II (June 1832), 449-451.
- _____. "Old Books," New-England Magazine, II (January 1832), 46-49.
- _____. "Spring," New-England Magazine, II (April 1832), 330-332.
- Kingsley, James L. "Albums," The Microcosm, II (October 1835), 1-2.
- Knapp, Samuel L. "Life As It Is," Boston Literary Magazine, I (June 1832), 92-95.
- McLellan, Isaac. "Angling," The Legendary (Boston, 1828), I, 208-212.
- _____. "A Bachelor's Room, and Reverie," Pearl, IV (January 17, 1835), 151.
- _____. "A Description of a Very Pretty Girl," Pearl IV (January 3, 1835), 136-137.
- [Megary, Henry I.?] "Diary of a Pedestrian," Wanderer (New York, 1821), pp. 79-85.
- Mellen, Grenville. "The Last of the Dog-Days," Sad Tales and Glad Tales (Boston, 1828), pp. 1-4.
- Morton, Sarah Wentworth. "Island of Nantucket," Boston Lyceum, II (September 1827), 112-114.
- Neal, John. "English and American Women," The Albion, VII (June 28, 1828), 22-23.
- _____. ["On Women's Hearts"], Rural Repository, IX (June 2, 1832), 14.
- Paulding, James Kirke. "Letter IV," Letters from the South (New York, 1817), I, 31-39.
- _____. "Letter XIV," Letters from the South (New York, 1817), I, 157-165.
- _____. "Letter XXXVII," Letters from the South (New York, 1817), II, 193-213.
- _____. "Of the Best Modes of Killing the Grand Enemy of the Fashionable Human Race, Who Have Nothing To Do in This World--But Be Happy," New Mirror for Travellers (New York, 1828), pp. 281-292.
- _____. "Of Matrimony, and the Best Mode of Insuring Happiness in the State, by a Discreet Choice of a Helpmate," New Mirror for Travellers (New York, 1828), pp. 277-281.
- _____. "A Ramble in the Woods," Knickerbocker Magazine, I (January 1833), 15-19.
- Pike, Albert. "Of Walking," Pearl, IV (December 6, 1834), 104.
- _____. "The Philosophy of Bowling," Pearl, IV (December 6, 1834), 103-104.

- Pray, Isaac C., Jr. "Boyhood," Pearl, IV (August 20, 1834), 10-11.
- _____. "Midnight," Pearl, III (March 1, 1834), 123.
- _____. "Music," Pearl, III (May 24, 1834), 172.
- _____. "Pedestrianism," Pearl, IV (January 10, 1835), 147.
- Sands, Robert C. "Association," The Talisman, 1830 (New York, 1829), pp. 199-215.
- _____. "Reminiscences of New York. No. II," The Talisman, 1830 (New York, 1829), pp. 337-358.
- Sedgwick, Catherine. "The Sabbath in New England," American Common-Place Book of Prose (Boston, 1828), pp. 190-192.
- Sewall, Samuel E. "Christmas," Boston Lyceum, I (January 15, 1827), 45-49.
- _____. "An Essay on Garrets," New-England Magazine, IV (May 1833), 399-406.
- _____. "An Essay on Names," New-England Magazine, IV (April 1833), 272-275.
- _____. "An Essay on Weathercocks and Signs," New-England Magazine, IV (June 1833), 485-494.
- _____. "A Short Chapter on Long Ears," New-England Magazine, VI (April 1834), 314-316.
- Simms, William Gilmore. "The Indian Character," Family Magazine, III (May 1835), 119-120.
- Tuckerman, H. T. "Analogy," The Essayist, I (March 1832), 80-81.
- _____. "Letter Writing," The Essayist, I (September 1833), 363-365.
- _____. "The Rose-Colored Packet," New-England Magazine, IX (September 1835), 195-200.
- _____. "Sketches at Sea," Pearl, IV (January 24, 1835), 160.
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- _____. "A Night at the French Opera," Atlantic Club-Book (New York, 1834), I, 309-312.
- _____. "Pencilings By the Way," New-York Mirror, IX (September 25, 1831), 92.
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Bibliographical Note. The following list is divided into two parts. The first contains titles of magazines and newspapers from which the primary materials for this dissertation have been drawn. In addition to the usual bibliographical data, I have supplied in brackets the city of publication for each entry in which such information is not evident in the title of the periodical. The volume numbers and inclusive dates call attention to those issues of the particular periodical from which material has been gathered; these volume numbers and dates do not necessarily indicate the entire life-span of the individual periodical, although for many of the short-lived ones such is often the case. I have used for each entry the short title by which the magazine or newspaper is usually known in the Library of Congress Catalogue of Printed Books, Frank Luther Mott's History of American Magazines, and Clarence Brigham's History and Bibliography of American Newspapers.

The second division contains sources other than periodicals from which primary materials have been drawn (i.e., gift books, annuals, essay collections, collected works of individual authors, miscellanies), and also secondary sources.

I. Periodicals Containing Primary Materials.

- Aladdin's Lamp [New York City], No. 1 (November 1833).
The Albion, or, British, Colonial, and Foreign Weekly Gazette [New York City], VI-VII (June 1827-May 1829).
The Album and Ladies' Weekly Gazette [Philadelphia], I-VII (January 1827-June 1833).
American Athenaeum; or Repository of the Arts, Sciences, and Belles Lettres [New York City], I (April 1825-February 1826).
American Magazine and Historical Chronicle [Philadelphia], I-III (September 1743-December 1746).
American Magazine and Monthly Chronicle for the British Colonies [Philadelphia], I (October 1757-October 1758).
American Magazine of Useful and Entertaining Knowledge [Boston], I (September 1834-August 1835).
American Magazine; or, A Monthly View of the Political State of the British Colonies [Philadelphia], Nos. 1-3 (January-March 1741).
American Museum, or, Universal Magazine [Philadelphia], I-IV (January 1787-December 1788).
American Quarterly Review [New York City], I-XIX (March 1827-June 1836).
Analectic Magazine [Philadelphia], V-VII (January 1815-June 1816).
Atkinson's Casket, or Gems of Literature, Wit, and Sentiment [Philadelphia], Nos. 1-12 (January 1833-December 1834).
The Atlas. Or Literary, Historical and Commercial Reporter [New York City], I-II (September 1828-August 1830).
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Boston Courier, April 3, 1826-April 14, 1828.
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Boston Lyceum, I-II (January-November 1827).
Boston Telegraph, January 1-December 23, 1824.
Boston Weekly Magazine, and Ladies' Miscellany, III (November 1818-May 1819).
Charleston [S. C.] Courier, January 18-April 28, 1828.
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- Godey's Lady's Book [Philadelphia], I-XI (July 1830-December 1835).
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- The Literary and Philosophical Repertory [Middlebury, Vt.], I-II (April 1812-July 1816).
- Literary and Theological Review [New York City], I-II (June 1834-June 1835).
- Masonic Mirror: and Mechanic's Intelligencer [Boston], I (January-December 1825).
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